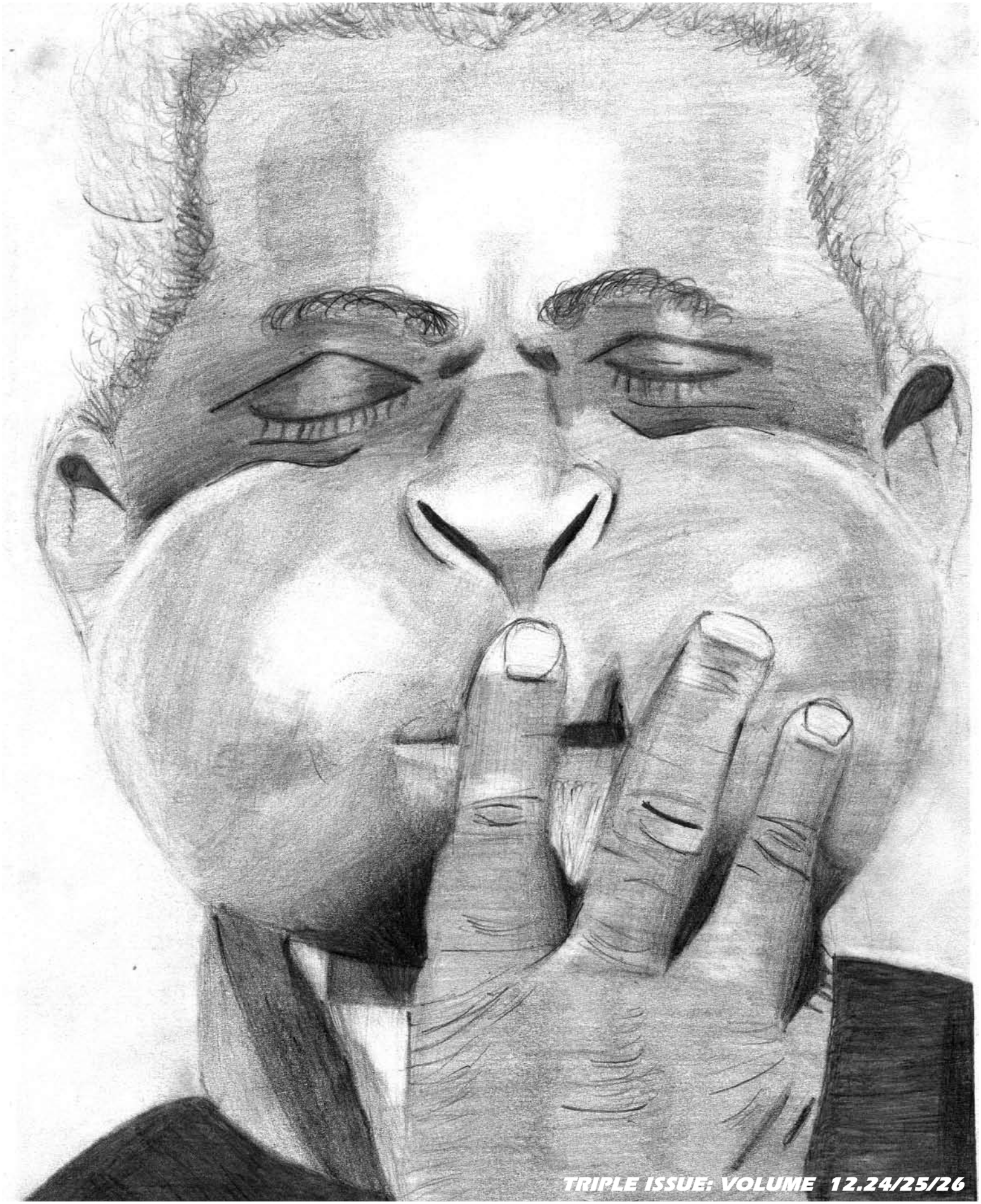
The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN ▪ A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE



TRIPLE ISSUE: VOLUME 12.24/25/26

Hey you Beat editorial note readers! What's the word in your world? Plenty cookin' in the world of The Beat Within. We just completed this amazing triple issue for you to absorb, plus we're working on our two books, we're wheelin' and dealin' with getting the word out about this amazing work, and summer is here and we're enjoying an onslaught of young interns. So, although there wasn't an issue last week, we were working our tails off! So, did you miss us? We missed you readers, who reside in the juvenile halls we go into each week, yet it was very good for us to take a mental health week off from the writing workshops last week. We'll probably be taking a few more off in the coming months as well. The relentlessness of this work, calls for timeouts here and there, plus given there is only a few of us doing this work, around the clock, we'll need a time out in the action more often than not.

Last week was devoted to editing each day, except on July 4th, with our attempts to catch up with the backlog of writings we have sitting in our file cabinet.

As we said in the beginning of this note, this issue is called a triple issue of writing, although not every unit from each of those weeks is represented. There is a taste of writings from 12.24, 12.25 and 12.26 which represents the heart and soul of each week! We do hope you find your pieces in this issue and if not, at least we are two steps closer to being a bit more timely, so hopefully next week's issue, 12.27, will be the issue where you finally read your work. We shall see!

Well, it's good to be back, can't say this enough! We hope you too appreciate this outlet to vent and share the thoughts with the forever-growing Beat community. We know many of you do too.

A friendly reminder — just because you write in our workshops doesn't guarantee your piece getting published. Our new standards for publishing pieces is that in order to get published it must be at least a "standout" or better, so don't give us the shout-out piece, the love letter piece, or the piece updating us on your court date or where you are heading from the hall. Also, we don't need the incriminating pieces or why you are the "baddest gangster" to walk the face of the earth. Plus, it's hard to say anything important in just two or three sentences, so don't take the lazy way out. Write for real! Get it? Of course you do.

What gets in is simple: writers showing some heart in your contributions

Ok, given space is limited, allow us to address the topics to give you readers some idea what was discussed prior to the writing sessions, as well as maybe inspire you to write on one of our topics. We'd love to get new takes on these topics! It's never too late to write on any topic for The Beat Within!

For issue 12.24, the first topic addressed was "What Do You Deserve Because You've Earned It?"

The second topic, "Education in The Hall" – As most of you know, while incarcerated as a minor, it is mandatory that you attend school. This week we want you to write about your experience with education while being incarcerated. Take us on a tour into the classrooms. Give us a glimpse of what the teachers and the assignments are like. Tell us what would you change from what you already know? Describe what has helped you and what has not? Break it down for us and tell us about your education experience while in the hall. If it's good, tell us why it's good. If it's bad, explain why it's bad and what could make it better. Please do not use The Beat to hate on any specific teachers.

The third topic, "What Have You Had To Relearn?" As children, we learn many things by playing with other children, by being scolded by our parents or other adults when we misbehave, by our own experiences. But then things happen along the way, and we sometimes forget the lessons of our childhood. So, what did you learn as a child that you forgot, and have had to relearn as a young adult?

Lastly, "Whales vs. People"-Two whales are trapped in the San Francisco Bay, trying to make their way back to the ocean. Scientists have been consulted to find a way to lure them back; veterinarians have found a way to inject them with antibiotics for infections they might be suffering; they have been a part of every news report since they were first spotted; and hundreds of people have lined the shores all the way to Sacramento to watch them make their way downstream. Do people care more about whales than they care about other people?

For issue 12.25 we came in with the topics, "What's Wrong With My People?" - We published a piece in The Beat Without this week titled, "What's Wrong With My People?" You should read it, its on page thirty-seven. He's basically talking about how gangs and the lifestyles that come along with them are plaguing his people. So we thought we should make it a topic. What do you think is wrong with your people? Do you feel like your people could make improvements and if so, what are those improvements? Do you feel like there are certain individuals that give your people a bad name? And if so, what would you say to those people? And if you can't think of anything wrong with your people, or you feel like they are too advanced to have to make improvements, then tell us what's right with your people? How far have your people come? Think about it for a second and then let us know, what's wrong with your people?

The second topic, "If You Live The Life You Want To Lead, How Will Your Obituary Read?" - Obituary - Definition: an announcement, especially in a newspaper, of somebody's death, often with a short biography or description of that person and their life, and a list of family members survived by them (wife/husband, children, grandchildren, etc). You have a chance to do something nobody ever gets to do in real life – write your own obituary. Imagine that you lived the perfect life – whatever that means for you. You've lived a long healthy life, done everything you wanted to do, seen everything you wanted to see, had all the relationships you wanted to have with friends, family, etc. Write what those people closest to you would write about you after your death - your achievements, the things you loved, your legacy. What would you want people to remember the most about you? How does this compare with where you are now in your life? What changes would you need to make to become that person you wrote about? What plans would you need to make for the future?

Lastly for this issue, the very-very popular, "Can Money Buy Happiness?" We all know that money can buy cars, houses, jewelry, etc. But can it really buy happiness? Do you have to have money to be happy? Or can you be happy without money?

During the 12.26 week our topics were, "Mail, Phone Calls, Or Visits..." - We know there aren't many highlights in a day while being locked up, but we also know that there are a few. Things like getting mail, getting phone calls, or getting visits... Whatever connects us to the outside is a highlight for that day. What we want to know this week is which form of contact is more important to you — mail, phone calls, or visits? We know you get to hear your loved ones voice over the phone. And you get to see and hear their voice at a visit. But we also know that you can get pictures in the mail and letters you can take back to your cells and read over and over again. So, which one is most important to you — mail, phone calls, or visits? And please don't forget to explain why.

The second topic, "When I Am On My Block I See..." - This week in the most respectful way, that is if you want to be published, tell us what goes on in your hood. What attracts you to the block? Who is on the block? How did you find your block? Is the block safe? Now tell us what you see through your eyes.

Lastly, "My Dad..."

OK, lets wrap this issue up by sending this issue out to all you writers who believe in The Beat Within, and have been very patient waiting to see your work in print. See you all in The Beat Within, hopefully sooner than later, especially now that we are catching up with our edits.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

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Volunteers: Rebecca Wahlgren, Elizabeth Crawford, Jen Zimmer, Sarrah Babcock, and Morghan Velez Young.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: It truly has been awhile since we last had a "Counselor's Corner" featured in The Beat Within, so this week we are extremely happy to have counselor, Ms. Slaughter share some words of wisdom with us all. We hope this is not the last time we hear from her, let alone any of you wonderful counselors we meet each week in our many workshops. With that said, Ms. Slaughter steps up big on our Beat topic, "What's Wrong With My People." We hope her words hit home with you readers.

Our Fellow Brother

What's wrong with my people;
I wonder why we fight with each other, disrespecting our fellow brother.
What's wrong when death seems to be more valuable than life?
What's wrong when the system has more value than honest living?
What's wrong when we teach our young men to roam instead of holding the home? What's wrong, we have no respect for our history and our ancestors.
What's wrong with my people?
I say drugs and a lack of education is what's wrong.
The infestation of drugs in our community, my people thinking it's there to get us rich. But, it's there to put us in the ditch, keeps us oppressed then we get arrested,
leaving our children behind, allowing the system to take over our lives.

-Ms. Slaughter, Santa Clara County Counselor

That Girl

A young teen and 2 months pregnant,
She was so scared of what her family would say
So she ran away to LA.
She called her mom and tried to tell her,
But at the sound of her moms voice she broke down and cried.
All she heard was "is that you?" and she hung up the phone.
The very next day she tried to call again and this time her little sister answered
the phone.
All she could say was, "I love you and I'm sorry," and she hung up the phone.
Seven months later that little girl gave birth.
No one was at the hospital with her
She called her mom and she heard her moms voice and cried.
Through the tears she told her mom why she ran away her mom told her to come home.
Instead she stayed in the streets with the baby and the baby's dad.
The next thing this girl knew was that she was selling her body
to make money for him.
Every night she came home he beat her because he was messed up on booze.
The girl woke up hopping that the next person she got into a car with
would kill her but it never happened.
Her baby's father gave her a bad line of cocaine and she fell unconscious and died.

-Dennise, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Wow, what a tragic story. It shows the dangers of running away and getting involved with a bad person, drugs, and prostitution. How heartbreaking for the girl's family who will probably never recover from this. How tragic for the girl's daughter who will never know her mother.

My Dad, Yesterday And Today

When I was younger, my dad made many mistakes… He was in a situation when my sister had to call the cops on him. He was put in jail for a while and was bailed out by my mom.

My mom later divorced him because he cheated on my mom.

Time went on, people changed, but I was still angry with my father for the things he did. He never stopped trying to talk to me, but I brushed him off.

He now comes to visit me as much as he can here (in juvenile).

My dad's side of his family dislikes him, and my mother and sister dislike him too, but I saw it in his eyes that he was a changed man. I was the only thing left important in his life.

I know he has to keep his pride and to be a man but he always shed tears when he talks about his sins. I'm grown up now and I now understand and I can now say I love him. I'd forgive him with all my heart and I want him to know he won't lose me and I'll be there for him as much as I can because that is what I also want.

Happy Fathers Day Dad!

-Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Now if you haven't told this to your dad, we would be more than happy to give you back this piece to give it to him 'cause he deserves to read this. We are glad to hear that he comes to visit and supports you and vice versa. Sounds to us like yo utwo have a very special relationship, cherish it and work towards bettering your life!

I've Seen Plenty

When I am on my block I see so many things good and bad, but most of the time it's something little kids shouldn't see or grow up around.

I grew up on my block and I always saw people standing on a corner with something in their hands and little did I know they were selling drugs and drinking a 40. I saw how much money they had, so I would watch how they made it, so when I got older I got involved with them and the business.

They told me before I could I had to be from the hood and get ranked in, so I did because I always wanted to have money and not worry about being hungry or homeless. Little did I know what I was getting my self into, and how hard it really was, because some times other people would try to sell on my block. I had to do what I had to do, so they wouldn't come back.

Every time I saw a cop I would try to blend in with the other people so they wouldn't stop me and ask questions.

After a while I told my self this isn't how I want to live all my life, yeah, I had the money I always wanted, but it only made me happy to a point. Then I got my chick pregnant, and I told my self I would not let my little girl grow up like I did, because the way I see it I am lucky to be alive.

-Michael, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: That is the first step towards a good change; you have seen what the gang life and drugs do to our younger generation and their families. It's also good that you want a better life for your baby girl. Take care of the problems you have with the legal system and make that change, don't just talk about it. As the saying goes, "Talk is cheap".

Money

I'm common but yet so valuable,
my color is green.
I have so many friends,
people kill for me.
I get kidnapped all the time.
I roll with any clique.
I don't care about your health,
don't trust me 'cause I'll just betray you.
You think you know me but you're wrong.
I'll kill you, but you can't kill me.
Don't get used to the happiness that I pass,
'cause deep down you know it will never last.

-Bugs, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: The words of a poet, harsh and to the point, yet, true through the eyes of Bugs. Money looks for a greedy hand, and that is the downfall of many, Greed. Don't let it betray you, stay true.

Motivation

I have no motivation for writing to The Beat. If I were to speak the truth, it would be nothing positive, nothing that anyone would benefit from hearing. So therefore I will keep my negativity to myself. It's hard to say or act or try to be positive when all my life has been negative and all my feelings are impossible to put into words. Screw being positive because it wouldn't be nothin' but pretend, just to please other people.

-Zack, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Zack, we bet that when you got done with writing the words above, you felt just a little bit better than you did before you started. You didn't have to write positive things to end up feeling a little bit better. Just the act of writing usually does the trick. Writing-out what ails you is almost as good as finding a friendly ear to talk to, an ear that won't judge you, but will listen, quietly.

My Life On The Run

What up Beat, just dropping by to say hello! Hopefully everyone is staying up in here. What I'm about to share is how my life is, or was, living on the outs.

My life started off living with my grandma, because my mom was in prison. She stayed in and out of prison 'till I was seven. When I was seven she got out on parole. She was doing ok for a while but little by little, she started doing bad – using drugs, stealing, drinking. She didn't think I would catch on. She thought I was too young. Well, I was catching on. She would take me to the store, park the car in front and then a couple of seconds later she would come running out with a lot of stuff in her hands, throw it in the car and take off.

We moved to Sacramento about a year later. I was about to be nine years of age. She was doing worse, leaving me with her friends to go sell her body.

I was going to school, doing good, not telling anybody about my life. But I was more mature than most my age. That year I started doing bad. I looked like I was sixteen, so I started hanging around with older girls, having grown men holler at me, running in the streets. Then I started getting in fights. My sister got out of juvie and ran away to be with me and my mom in Sacramento. Me and my sister teamed up and started fighting with other girls everyday.

Well, I ended up getting in a bad fight with a fifteen-year-old. I beat her ass and her mom tried getting hard with my mom. So, my mom beat her mom's ass. Cops came and arrested me and my mom because we had no marks and they did. Well, my mom was wanted for check-theft and violating so they took her to prison and me to juvie.

I got out two weeks later and my dad got custody of me. We moved back to San Jose. My sister was still on the run, living with her friends in Sacramento. I was eleven, about to be twelve. He enrolled me in a school called August Boeger on the East Side.

I met a guy while I was going there. He was cute and sweet so we started talking from August to October. I got kicked out and then went to Ocala and then we moved to Burnell.

I left Burnell in December then went to a school named Davis. I moved in January and went to Herman.

When I turned twelve, I was living in a two-room apartment with my dad and my brother. This whole time I'd been talking to that same guy.

Well, in February, I started doing bad: getting high before school and drinking.

In February of 2006, there was a "Citizenship for Mexicans" walk off campus. We all did it but after awhile everyone went home. I didn't want to go home because I thought I was going to get in trouble. So I called up that guy I been talking to and told him to meet me at the Oakridge Mall and he did.

Well, that day I ended up running away. I stayed at his house that night. We were in his room, talking all night.

Well, the next morning he went to school, so I left. It was a Tuesday and I went to my homeboy's house for a little bit, got high and left.

Then I went to these people's house and they told me that they'd hide me, but they ended up snitching me out to my dad. So he came and picked me up and I went home and went to sleep.

Then I went to school, but I got a Saturday school for walking off campus, so I went to school that whole week but on Saturday, I ran away again with the same guy. But this time, I stayed with him for like five weeks, like from March to April.

Then I called my dad to see if he was okay and he said "yeah."

My brother wanted me to go live with him in Oakland for a while. So I came home April 10th and he took me to Oakland where I stayed for a few weeks, then I ran away again.

My boyfriend had me talk to his mom because he lived with his aunt and his mom lived in Merced. She wanted him to come home. She wanted me to go with him, so on May 1st she came and picked both of us up and took us to Merced. Well, we were having so much fun.

His dad would pick us up now and then and take us bottle jacking to make money. We would go back with his mom and go swimming.

Well, in the middle of June, me and his sister got in a fight, so I left to Fresno with my cousin.

After a while I came back with my boyfriend and my little sister ran away from her foster home and took the Greyhound to Merced to live with me in July.

Soon after that we went to the store and I didn't know she was stealing but she took a bottle of hairspray. Well, we ended up getting caught and she took off running. We were already outside. I didn't run so they wouldn't chase her. So, I got caught and taken to juvenile hall in Merced.

Two weeks later I got transferred over here to Santa Clara.

I got out July 21st, two weeks after that on CRP. Three days after I got out, my boyfriend came to see me from Merced but he came at night and had to go back, so I ran off CRP and went back with him, so I had a warrant out for my arrest.

Well, there I was back in Merced, my little sister was staying with my brother but took off with her boyfriend for San Francisco. I was pissed because I couldn't get a hold of her but she ended up calling my boyfriend. I picked up and she was okay. I couldn't tell her nothing – even though she 's only 11 years old – because I was doing the same thing.

My boyfriend and I were hella fighting at this time, up to December. Nothing exciting happened, we were just getting in fights with other people, stealing from stores, just being bad but not getting caught for it.

In Christmas of '06 we all moved back over here to San Jose: me and all his brothers and sisters, his mom and dad. His uncle came and picked us all up in a little car. We all had to fit in, it was nothing – we made it.

It felt so good to be back. My boyfriend and I still fought all the time, so after New Years, I turned myself in to do my time and get it over with, so they let me out a month later in February.

They sent me to Santa Rosa with my grandparents. Well, about a week later, I found out they were sending me with my mom far away, so I ran away and had another warrant for my arrest.

My boyfriend moved back to Merced, but his sister came and picked me up, but we ended up getting evicted, so we moved to Modesto with his aunt. Me and him were staying with his other aunt downtown, but in March of this year, we ended up breaking up.

Well, I was staying at friend's houses here and there, then all his homeboys didn't like him no more 'cause they heard he was hitting me and I started kicking it with them.

I called my sister and she said I could stay with her until April 22nd. She was going to Colorado, so I did. I was just having fun, not having to worry bout nothing, so comes April 22nd and I moved in with my now best friend. She was someone I went to school with a while back. Well, I stayed with her until May. We were going everywhere: Oakland, San Francisco, Great America, but May 26th, I left and ran into my homeboy. He let me stay at his house but on the 28th, his parents called the cops and turned me in. Since then, I been in here but thats just a part of my life. I'm only a young teen – that's a lot for just a thirteen year old. Late!

-Lil' One, Santa Clara

From the Beat: Lil' One, this is an amazing and incredible journey, especially for someone so young. It sounds like being in the Hall is the most grounded you've been for the past year and a half. What are your plans to stay in one place when you get out? Your relationship with your boyfriend sounded really intense and not so healthy in the end. Are you glad that you are out of this relationship now? You are such a good writer, you should really think about staying in one place and staying in school. This piece shows that you are a strong-minded, independent lady – you can achieve what you want once you figure out what that is!

Got the kids being abused Makes 'em feel like they ain't got nothin' to lose

My Life

About my life: Well, it all started when I was a young teen. My brother and I had separated. He moved to a different city and left me behind. He was fifteen years old and wanting to be in gangs, chillin' with our older primos – thinking he knew what he was doing after he told me that he would never leave me 'cause me and him only have each other.

Then I started going downhill 'cause I had too much on my mind. I moved back with my mom then I started going out more and kickin' it with the homies, started using drugs. I'd cut class and get picked up, then pop pills. I'd start partying hella early, meet up with my gurls, then we'd be all messed up, bumpin' beats, crusin' around town like what?! I started doing more serious stuff like smoking dope, running away, stealing cars, kickin' it in houses that didn't belong to me – if you know what I mean.

I dropped out of school and started stealin' clothes, shoes, make-up, and all kind of shhh like that for myself. Came up on cash that wasn't even mine and spent it like it was a thing to do. We'd always be coming up on beer. Acting like fools.

I ain't gonna lie, all this shhh was fun at the time. But now that I look back at all the shhh that I did, I'm like: Wow, it was all like one long roller coaster ride. I kind of feel bad for the shhh I did 'cause now one of my lil' sisters is trying to go the same route as me. It's messed up 'cause it went from my big bro to me and now my lil' sister.

We all make our own choices and this time I had a choice and I chose wrong, all 'cause I felt like no one cared about me and stuff like that, but that's a lie. It wasn't all 'cause I was hurt. I just wanted to be out in the streets doing whatever I wanted to do, having my fun.

I kind of did have a messed up life when I was younger, but still that ain't no excuse. I was just weak-minded at the time. But that's not for long, whenever I do get out I'm gonna do what I gotta do to stay out. I ain't gonna be stressin' my mom out anymore, even though I'm not gonna live with her anymore. That's another thing that I lose – a good relationship with my mother.

I'm so sick of being locked up. I been locked up one two many times, including out of state. Why? All behind some stupid shhh. We only got one life to live, we got to make the best of it. Well, I don't know but everybody else in here but me, I'm ready to take care of my business and I'm talking about the right kind of business. I'm not saying I regret what I did in the past because at one point, that was exactly what I wanted. I can't change the past but I can work on my future. So, 'till pencil meets paper, I'm out.

-M, Santa Clara

From the Beat: This piece demonstrates a self-awareness that is powerful. You include lots of details that really bring your hard time to life – details are the key to any good story. You say several times that you have no regrets but are ready to move forward into a new life. It's good to know what you want and it sounds like you want to change.

Shame

I have a greed for violence
and I broke some laws.
Now I sit in silence
surrounded by walls.
Thinking of what I did
as the judge says my name -
remembering the blood
and all that pain.
I experience betrayal
because he dropped my name.
I sit in shackles from arms to ankles
as eyes are on me in shame.
Then they tell me I can go home,
on the monitor attached to the phone.
I believed it was a miracle,
something very spiritual.
Then I messed up –
returned to the same.
And now I feel the same shame.

-Jose, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Very fine writing. We don't know if this is you, or if you invented a character for your poem. Either way, it's well done. We love the music, as sad as it is, in the line "I sit in shackles from arms to ankles." Poets who've written for dozens of years would be proud of a line like that.

Blinded by Anger

What's wrong is that it's true that we are just killing ourselves for a number, for a color, for the barrio. We are blinded by anger against our own people. They have no idea of "la raza" is. "La Raza" is our people, and they are struggling to make a living, help each other out.

But we are stuck in this. It's the system that keeps us like this, being "illegal" limits us, puts us in the welfare system. And we see the only way to get out is to do what you can to survive. But we don't see that there are other ways to make it!

But in order to do this we need to stop what we are doing, killing, stealing, criminalizing our people and against our people and move forward positively.

-Eric, Alameda

From The Beat: The words you write here are so wise, so thoughtful and so full of pride and love for where you came from. You MUST live up to these words – get your education, get out of the game, become a leader. Bring the true meaning of "raza" back to the raza.

Life In Da 'Hood

In just a young brown maze, misunderstood
Grew up in a ghetto-ass neighborhood
Wit' crackheads on da block smokin' rocks
USOs just posted outside wit' their gun stocks
Got the baby's mammas outside wit' their kids
Bums in the alley way 'cause they ain't got nowhere to live
Got the husbands hittin' on their wives
Got the wives cheatin' on their husbands
Got the husbands hittin' on their kids
Got the kids being abused
Makes 'em feel like they ain't got nothin' to lose
So they run away and they start to join a gang doin' da same thang

-Tiny Samoa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You've explained the life you were brought up in very well, TS. This poem is wonderfully thought out. But how do you move beyond what you describe? Some people in your situation manage to overcome it, so what gives them that special strength to succeed?

What's Wrong With My People

Doin' what they do
Using them drugs
Busting them slugs
Messing up in schoo'
Acting like they ain't got nothing to lose
Beating up them foo's fo' they skrizze
Until someone gets killed
Then shhh gets serious
People getting furious
Shhh is delirious
Media stay curious
On what they do
But they do it to survive
Ain't meaning to be taking people's lives
But you got people plottin' on they death
Day and night
Surrounded by evil and darkness
With a little slight light
Thinking to myself
My people need help
But what could I do
I'm just a young little teen
Soon to be eighteen
Trying to see what awaits me
'Cause prison could either make me or break me
Been thinking a lot lately
But it ain't did good to me
So I'll just go to sleep
Kiss the pretty girls on they cheeks
Good night.

-Tiny Samoa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We understand your frustration when you look around and wonder what "just a young little teen" like you can do to fix what's so obviously broken. Maybe you should concentrate on that part of the picture that you can effect a change, namely your own life and how you live it. When you say prison can either make you or break you, does that mean you are headed for prison? How could such an experience make you? How could it break you?

What I Had To Relearn

As a child, I grew up being raised as an only child. Well, at least from my dad. As time went on, my dad was always on my case — on my case about discipline and, of course, responsibility. Parents' jobs are to teach that. When they are not doing that, it makes them feel like they are failing.

Growing up in the 'hood was very difficult for me. I tried my best to avoid it, but some way, somehow, I still managed to end up in this huge hole. As soon as I dug that hole deep enough, I realized I forgot all about my dads' lessons: responsibility and discipline. When I put myself between these walls, I thought to myself, "Damn, I failed my dad's lessons."

As time goes by in here, I develop more responsibility and discipline. Counselors help me, but it's not just them, it's me that really wants to get through it. Although there are always haters and shh-talkers, that's where these lessons kick in. It's said that it's not hard, but for me it is. Developing this took me a while. And I am still trying to relearn this.

Responsibility and discipline is what I had to relearn as a young adult. As an adult, this shhh ain't no game. It is time to wake the hell up people.

-Chuccy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What steps are you taking to develop these fine qualities of character? As you find yourself more responsible and more disciplined, do you see the world any differently? Will you be able to apply what you've learned to your life on the outs? In short, will you be able to make your dad proud?

What I Deserve

What do I deserve because I earned it is my money. I earned my money. It don't really matter how I earned it, it's just that I earned it doing work. Money don't just fall at chu. You gotta go get it and I'ma go-getta. I deserve it because I worked for it.

I don't consider sticking people up earning money because you're not doing nothing hard but holding a gun demanding things. Earned means working hard for. Working hard means putting time and effort into something. Cooking as a chef, helping people that need help like old people, cleaning houses, streets, yards, whatever, that's earning money because you're workin' for it.

I even consider da dope game earnings. It might not be hard workin' like things I wrote up top but you gotta look at it. You're out there workin' hours, 7 in da morning to 12 midnight. You're runnin' around a lot, you're doing things. For robbery you don't do nothing but hold a gun and take. In da dope game you're giving something back for da money. When you rob someone, you don't give them nothing but problems. But that's not why I wrote on this subject. I wrote because I earn my money and deserve it, and I hate when the police/system just take it. I consider that robbery, like I said, but instead of guns they use jails.

-Jr., San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a piece of the week for the power of its reasoning. Basically, what you are saying is that even the dope salesman is providing a service, supplying a demand, while the robber is nothing more than a parasite. We agree with that analysis (with the exception of the robber who has to steal to eat). But the problem is, with that kind of work there's a built-in cost that comes with any activity the society has declared "illegal," and that is the cost you're paying right now. Sometimes, it's not enough to be right. You can win the argument and still lose you're freedom. Which is more important to you?

Education, Education, Education...

Attending school in the Hall is nothing like going to school on the outs. I think going to school while incarcerated is not a motivation. Classes in here are way too easy, because the system probably assumes that every single person that is locked up in the juvenile justice system doesn't go to school and that we're all behind.

The mandatory school here makes me feel really low, because the teachers just give us assignments and the answers. On the outs, teachers would make me read and help me understand the assignments and have me do the assignments on my own. The so-called "learning centers" shouldn't even be named that, because they don't teach anything that challenges the mind. To make schools better for the detainees, I think everybody should take assessments to see where we are on every subject and get individual work.

-Baby C, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is an excellent analysis and a great suggestion for individual assessments. But we can tell that you've done what you needed to do in school on the outs because you express yourself very well, and your grammar and spelling are perfect. So, if you're not getting the education you know you need, then fill in the gaps yourself by reading what you need to read and seeking the help of others where you need it. Plus, you are blessed to be able to help other young people with their schooling. Keep learning and keep teaching.

When I put myself between these walls, I thought to myself, "Damn, I failed my dad's lessons."

Some Dad

My dad is a chump, he's never been there for me or my mom. Since I've been born all he's been is bad news for the family. In and out of jail can't be mad at him for that 'cause look where I am at.

The one thing I can be mad at, is him never being there and when he was, he was high as a kite beating my beautiful mother.

The one thing I can be happy for is, him being in San Quentin State Prison. He being there ten years of my life has made me and my mom that much closer, so when Fathers Day comes around I say, I love you momma!

-Rj, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's tragic that we have heard that chump story a million times! Forget about it, you got you moms and that's all you need. Get out and go show yo' mamma how much you appreciate her.

Money Makes Da World Go 'Round

Can money buy me happiness? Like da saying go, "Money make da world go 'round." I say it can buy you happiness because without it, you'll be miserable, going through stress to pay ya bills, starving 'cause you gotta limit on ya eating 'cause you can't afford to keep buying groceries, all that.

I say you have to have money to be happy but I also say money can bring you problems having to worry about the haters tryna get cha fa ya stash, like ransoms and shhh like that. You know how it is. If you got a enemy and they know you paid, they'll try snatch ya lil' one or some one close to get dat dough.

But yeah, I think you need money to be happy 'cause it could do lots of things for you. For example a paid attorney can get chu out a hole you could have some years over they'll try snatch ya lil' one or some one close to get dat doe. But yeah I think you need money to be happy 'cause it could do lots of things for you. For example a paid attorney can get chu out a hole. You could have some years over your head, and a paid attorney can fix that up ya dig, 'cause you know ya freedom being taken from you don't bring nothing but misery. But yeah that's dat.

-Jr., San Francisco

From The Beat: We wish we could say that money doesn't buy freedom, but unfortunately, we think you're right about the effects of being able to afford a good attorney. But we can see that you're also wise enough to see that money isn't the answer to everything, and that if you let it, it can ruin your life.

My Dad

My dad is lame,
My dad ain't no man.
My dad is the kind of "vato" that would run and hide,
My dad is the kind of "vato" that would leave his kids behind.
My dad is the kind of "vato" that always needs a fix.
My dad is that "vato" that if I see I'll whip his ass.
My dad would never be a model to me.
And that's the kind of man or dad I ain't going to be.

-Travieso, Santa Clara

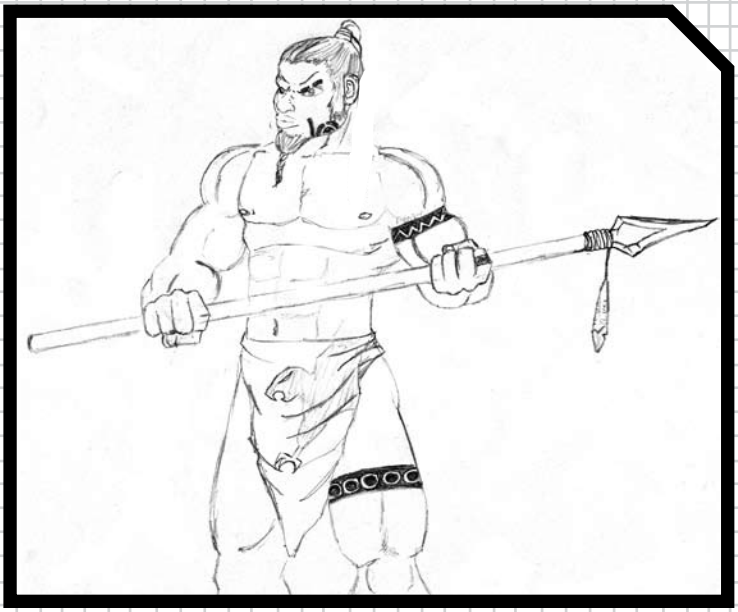
From The Beat: Who knows why you got dealt the card you did. Who knows why you did not get to have the ideal dad. It is great to read that you have chosen to respond to your own disappointment in a profound way. Instead of just being angry at your situation, you have learned to turn it into something that will benefit your own children. Wow, how great! You know, some parents accidentally disappoint their children. How do you plan to not accidentally do the same thing as your dad?

People Living In Poverty

When I sit in my room and hear about shootings and robberies
I can't help but think of poor folk and poverty
I can envision people of the same race
killing each other over pocket change. Is it truly the case?
People running the streets, sleepless with no hope,
selling their souls to the devil for a quarter piece of dope
Trying to live the fast way,
but who knows if anyone of us will live to see another day.
The Lord constantly taking young youth in their prime
You lost a family member to violence and revenge is all that's on your mind.
You should be mourning, I can see why you're mad.
But the eye-for-an-eye perspective just seems to make things horribly bad.
Government promoting same race violence
People trying to speak of such things but all we hear is silence.
And yes, I am tired of hearing the same old song,
but in my eyes, that's what is really going wrong.

-Giovanni, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What do you mean when you accuse the government of "promoting same race violence." Do you mean that the killings we read about every week are serving the government's goals? If so, how can individuals like you frustrate those goals, and set your own? There are so many obstacles put in front of young people, especially impoverished young people, we're wondering what you're doing on a personal level to overcome these obstacles.



Relearning That Life Is Beautiful

Me being a child, I have to relearn that life is beautiful, and it's important to have your freedom in life to do the things you love. I have to relearn that life is short and it's not much time to fool around and be dumb minded. My "relearn" is to be the best I can be in life, live life freely and happy, and enjoy the beautiful life you live and love one another. Don't hate!

-Yun Jay Pitt, San Francisco

From The Beat: As short as this piece is, it's packed with wonderful lessons to be learned and relearned. Life IS short and freedom IS precious. We cannot put a value on what lessons you've written about, except to say they are the most important that we know. Thank you.

To Change The World People Need To Change First

For the world to change, people gots to change first.
You can't change the people if you're like me.
You first have to change yourself,
the way you can change yourself is to change lil' things
like the way you speak (bad words).
But the only way that can happen is if you put effort to change.
Lil' by lil' people can change and then the world changes.
But sometimes people are scared to change the world or themselves.
It doesn't have to be big to change the world.
Change can be good or bad, you pick the choice to change.

-Ulysis, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a great point you made Ulysis. Sometimes people are scared to change themselves. Why do you think this happens? Is it because people are afraid they will fail at their attempt to change? But everyone fails at some point. We all have failed many times; some of these failures have been more painful than others. If we never work to change, we never get to enjoy beauty that we build by ourselves.

Revolving Doors

I dream about myself becoming something big in life not necessarily grand but enough to get noticed.

I find myself drifting, not knowing where to go or what to do.

I always contemplate on doing the wrong thing but doing the wrong thing got my ass where I'm at today. So where do I go? What do I do? The same questions come upon my mind everyday and the same answers are the only ones I say, living the life of crime is not for everyone, and even though I've been locked up a couple times, crime has become my life.

I come back and forth, in and out only having a short period of time to act like a human being. Knowing in my conscious that I will always past through these revolving doors again, again and again.

Finding the answers deep within myself will stop me from entering these doors. The answers may not be held there, who knows, that's for me to know and the world to find out.

Advice, maybe some guidance will serve as a hint, but I've took that direction before and feel I've obtained everything I need, so why do I still feel empty and lost? If my answers are not within me or from someone more intelligent, where are they?

The answers keep reappearing but only as a mystery. So until they get solved these revolving doors I keep passing through are going to keep spinning allowing open arms, accepting me every time to come back and forth, in and out again, again, and again.

-Doug E. Fresh, Alameda

From The Beat: We bet you have the answers to this magnificent poetic commentary Doug E. You tell us in your next piece the plan so you never find yourself in such a position again!

Rest In Peace Me: 6/21/90 – 7/24.2075

If I lead the life I used to live, the outcome will not be pretty. I'll end up dead for a drug deal gone sour, or end up dead hanging with my homies, or dead by the cops. So that's why I'm not going to lead the life anymore. I'm going to get out and go to school, get a job, and be there for my family.

Well, even if I did that, I could end up dead in the long run, if I don't stop drinking, smoking and popping pills. That's what I'm going to do, too. Stop using drugs. That's the real reason my life is messed up.

So now, when I reform my ways, my obituary will say like this "Dominic Gabriel Cory T. died last night of old age. Dominic lived a full life to the age of eighty-five. In his days he has accomplished many things. He graduated high school, college, played professional basketball.

But he had not always lived this way. He used to be on the wrong road to an early death. He used to live his life for violence. He also used drugs for so many years and then reformed his ways to live a good life.

He is survived by his wife of sixty- years, his four kids, six grand-children and three great-great- grandchildren. Dominic T. Rest in Peace

-Lil' Mainey, Alameda

From This Beat: This is a marvelous piece, truly inspiring, and full of hope. Keep it, hold on to it, read it when your confidence flags and remember that today, you made a promise to yourself to live a life truly worth living. Do it!

My Legacy

With my mom, I messed up big time because my mom is the only parent that I got left.

My dad was never in my life. I never even knew him. He passed away when I was one year old. It was on my first birthday, too. Why? Because he was gang-banging. Yup, my dad was a homeboy and to top it all off, he got rushed by some other so-called homeboys. It was stupid because the fools who did it did not even know what the hell they were doing. Well, I ain't gonna go into the details about that but, ya, there's reasons why shhh happens.

So, my life ain't the best, but it could be worse. But it's up to me if I make it that way. I already have bad experience in hella shhh. The places I been to were not coo' and neither the shhh I caused and did.

I don't like the fact that I'm locked up once again, so that's why the next time I get out, I have to keep my head up and stay strong. I'm not gonna do what I do that keeps pulling me back to this place.

-M

From the Beat: That's a heartbreaking story about your father being murdered on your first birthday. It sounds like the legacy of your parent's actions weighs heavily on your mind. But it sounds like you understand that you have a choice and that is to change your ways.

New

New Composure
New posture in my walk
New look in my face and a new slang in my talk
New clothes that I wear
New girl that gets shared
New Beat that I write and new person I fight
New sun that shines
New wind that blinds my eyes
New day on the block to sell these rocks
New food that I eat – energized to play new balls on the street
New feelings I get with the love I'm with
Or to walk with a limp to think I'm a pimp
New books I read to get new knowledge I receive
To wake up to a new day in the life I need

-Justin, Alameda

From The Beat: Man these poems just nourish like rain in the desert. From good to bad, from high to low, it's that new that keeps us going... of course "new" is the word, because some of what you write just seems like "same old same old" especially when you talk about the killing routine of sharing girls and fighting and selling... you deserve a lifetime of new days, not cut short when you are still too... new!

Fightin' For Our Freedom

Why do we hate one another
Then go be fake to another
You tell yo' lies to your mother
But keep it real wit' a runner
Cry through the pain and the thunder
I ain't no range or no hummer
But I done been to shady places
Where it rains in the summer
I done been through hell and back
But dawg, I'll die for my people
Try to be equal, spread yo' wing
And fly like an eagle
And I was taught to think it out
Before I spoke out mind
But then I put my words together
Now I speak through a rhyme
Hook:
As my pencil meets the paper
You can take it or leave it
Our last breath is all the same
Although you hate to believe it
We been fightin' for our freedom
Since the days of birth
We still products of the poison still plaguin' the earth

-Young D, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a wonderful flow, Young D. But dawg, why would you die for our people? Do your people want you dead? Of course not. The truly courageous thing to pledge is to live for your people, and to be there for your people instead of in here.

Think Twice

I never thought it'd take me eighteen years to understand what people meant by what elders told me.

Everyone always said that "when you think twice, you'll make less mistakes". Thinking ain't hard at all.

This is a world of wants and needs. Do you want more than what you need? I wished I would have thought twice before making a lot of choices that I made.

People get told what to do everyday. Especially youngstas like myself. I'm not the sharpest tool in the shed box but, just think. Just think about what would be different if you thought twice 'bout the choice you made to get you in here.

If Bush thought 'bout why we really went into Iraq. One split-second reaction can mess up yo' whole life. It doesn't hurt to think twice. 18 years and now I finally realize what's really up.

When we getting told to do this and do that, just think, that if you think twice before what you do, life'll be a lot easier. What would've happen if you didn't pull that trigger, if you didn't sell that rock, sip that drink and did something stupid. Pop that pill tryin' to keep it real.

This is just like respect. 'cause when you get locked up you always think twice after like damn why I didn't do this. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

-Tigger, Alameda

From The Beat: This piece is chock-full of wisdom and good advice. Unfortunately, a lot of us have to learn the hard way about thinking twice. We hope lots of youngsters read your writing!

My Thoughts On Mail, Phone Calls, Or Visits

Visits are more important to me then a letter or either phone calls.

The reason why I think a visit is more better to me, because the two most caring people in my family get to come see me and just touch base with each other.

However letters and phone calls are good to because in letters you receive pictures to look at, and you get to read the letters you receive as many times as you want!

Also phone calls are helpful, because you could catch up with news and get to hear your love ones' voice. Although the three choices are all good to keep contact with, I would have to say a visit is more enjoyable.

Now however the visits get complicated, because you have so much to talk about and only have a certain amount of time. So through out the time you have got to spill your heart out and by the time you get all your feelings heard, you have to say good bye and see them again next visit.

Although there are positives and negatives through out a visit it's still the choice I would pick overall.

-Mic, Alameda County

From The Beat: Excellent on topic commentary about visits, phone calls and letters. We know all our readers will appreciate your take. Wonderful thoughtful writing!

Sayin' Different, But Doin' The Same

Why keep livin' the life you say you don't want to live, but still living it? You say you want to do good but you do the opposite. People say they want to go to school but instead they on the block 24/7. Others say they don't want to go to jail, but they still kickin' it with the same people so-called friends that got them locked up.

Some people need to wake up, before they end up six feet under or in prison for the rest of their life. This is gangsta Enano. Yeah, I'm back, but listen to the message.

-Enano, San Francisco

From The Beat: There's not one word that we can disagree with in this piece. But even you caught yourself giving excellent advice that you, apparently, weren't able to follow yourself! Why not? What do you need to help you do what you know you have to do?

Money

Money can break up pretty much anything: families, siblings, friends, partnerships. Loyalty is not a strong point of people these days, and certainly, faith is not big either.

When money becomes the main issue, everyone begins scrapping for the available change because despite the fact that people say you can live just on love, without money, in reality, it would be near impossible to survive.

Love cannot pay bills. Love cannot buy groceries. Love cannot earn you a degree. Love cannot keep you off the streets.

Money is a fickle thing. With or without money, people will still yearn for more. You can be a rich person, without happiness, but wouldn't it be worse to be living on the streets as a beggar, but happy? How long can you stay happy if you don't know where your next meal is going to be from? How happy can you be when the rain is falling and you have no shelter?

You don't need to be filthy rich, but having enough to live a comfortable life will most likely make you heavier.

-Cookie

From The Beat: You speak a lot of truths in this piece about the complexity of money. While, a greed for money tears people apart, you are smart to acknowledge that you have to have it in order to have a successful life. What are your plans to make money in the future? What do you envision as a good and happy life?

Today

It's a new day, I woke up with a smile on my face.
I know it seems odd 'cause I woke up in this place.
I thank God for His grace for waking me up to see another day
And I pray I live to see the next day.
The town has gone crazy, look on the news,
Another youngsta gone to the street life.
It's not only a war in Iraq but it's one right here
Because every day another family dropping a tea
And I wonder why people say they are hard
When they hear judge say YA they break apart
Do what you do but what goes around comes around what goes up must come down
Stop while you are ahead before you will be the next youngsta in the streets dead.

-D, Alameda

From The Beat: Another terrific and meaningful poem, opening on a note of hope before launching into the poem makes it even more dramatic when you hit us with your thoughts. What can we do to stop this war, and bring peace to a beloved city?

My Block

When you walk down my block, all you see is them ninjas and all these crackheads smokin' they shhh. All you hear is them 44s goin' off all day and the boys rollin' through, jackin' ninjas fo' no reason. You see them police runnin' through houses and plantin' shhh on ninjas fo' no reason.

Oh, yeah, but wait… there is a reason and the reason is 'cause they black. On my block and in my life, all I got is them ninjas and all my money is dependent on these feens. It's messed up, 'cause every day you got to wake up to the same shhh; don't shhh change fo' nothin'. Even when it does, boys start they mornin' rounds. Ninjas still out there, doin' whatever. Every ninja you see is out there, either high or runnin' from da police.

There's no peace. Every time I step out that door, it's like I'm takin' a chance with my life. All it takes is one step to start a thousand mile journey on my block, and right now shhh don't look good, 'cause my ninja just got killed, and he wasn't into no shhh. He was crippled in a wheelchair and some ninjas rolled up out of nowhere and pulled out and started blastin'. He got hit in the heart and died on that corner, and I think I could have been in his place easily.

Is messed up, but shhh, what can I do? I got no choice. I gotta take that chance every day. I'm used to it by now, but I still ain't trying to become a product of my environment, 'cause I see how people be lookin' at me funny. Even if I ain't did shhh, white people just don't like me.

But, anyways, I'm done, 'cause I'm just gettin' mad, thinkin' 'bout this bullshhh, and people actually think this shhh is coo'. I'd do anything to get out this shhh and be a regular kid that can go wherever without a heata (gun) on me.

-D Boii, San Francisco

From The Beat: You tackled this topic and made it your own. A lot of people used this topic in a way that we didn't intend. You know, to put their block above everyone else's and not really teach us anything. You actually taught us a whole lot. The main thing though is that you say that everyday on your block you wake up to the same stuff. That you have to watch your back all the time. How is this any different from being incarcerated? You end your piece by saying, "I'd do anything to get out this shhh and be a regular kid that can go wherever without a heata (gun) on me." You talk as though you have no control over your situation. So, if you don't have control, who does? And what needs to happen so you can be a "regular" kid?

Me And Lil' Bra

Pancho: What you want to be when you grow up?
Lil' Bra: You.
Pancho: Why you want to be me?
Lil' Bra: Because you is so gangsta. You been locked up and been on the run.
Pancho: Lil' Bra, don't follow my footsteps — that's not the way you want to go.
Lil' Bra: But you my idol. I want to be just like you.
Pancho: Look, Lil' Bra. Remember when you said you wanted to be a baseball player like me?
Lil' Bra: Yea.
Pancho: Well, how about we go play?
Lil' Bra: Let's go hit a lick.
Pancho: Where you learn about that?
Lil' Bra: I heard you and Vonte talk about it.
Pancho: You don't want to do that. You goin' to be in jail, like me.
Lil' Bra: So I'll be gangsta.
Pancho: You don't want to be a gangsta, you want to be a hustla, a legit hustla.
Lil' Bra: Like you?
Pancho: No, not like me. When I come home, I'm goin' to make sure you become something in life.
Lil' Bra: Can I be a baseball player?
Pancho: You can be whatever you want.
Lil' Bra: I love you. I want you home.
Pancho: I love you, too. I'll be home soon.
Lil' Bra: What do you want to be?
Pancho: A lawyer, but if that don't happen, I'm going to be a doctor.
Lil' Bra: Love you.
Pancho: Love you, too.

-Pancho, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a very creative and well-thought out interview between you and your little brother. We saw a billboard at a bus stop recently that had a picture of a young man locked up behind bars and it said, "You serve three years without parole, your brother serves three years without his best friend," and we think that would hit home if you saw it. You are very wise to not want your little brother to follow in your footsteps. What will you do to lead by example? How will you deal with your brother if he does start to follow in your footsteps? We hope you can get out and be the positive shoulder he needs to have there to lean on.

What's Wrong With Our People?

I think our people are very angry but don't know how to express their anger in a non-violent manner. Our people are only products of our environment and acting out what we've seen through media and on these streets. We know right from wrong, but yet we still act out.

I don't think we do it just to do it, I see it as an act of rebellion against how the society sets us minorities up for failure.

For four-hundred years we have not had an equal playing field, and our people are just tired of being treated unfairly. No one will ever see what our people go through daily as minorities. I think our people will just continue to act out until we get some type of salvation. And until that day, our people ain't gone stop.

-Positive Vibe, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a profound dilemma. When American society has so many inequalities, from the education system to the criminal justice system, what should an intelligent, young, black man, or any minority who has experienced discrimination, do about it? Different leaders have had different philosophies on this, from non-violence to more extreme forms of activism. A newer, mainstream voice with some positive ideas is Barack Obama. Maybe check out his writing? Your librarian can hook you up.

What's Wrong with My People?

Man, a lot of my homies think it's cool to do bad things. They never think of the consequences that's coming toward them. After they get caught, they get a little of the idea of what to think next time what not to do.

A lot of the homies still don't care, they do the same thing and get caught off guard. Instead, they should think what if you die or some of your homies get time for something they didn't do, get charged with some time or get shot. It's not cool for someone to do something and get a charge for their homie or get shot for them or even die.

-Casper, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're right, Casper, people on the streets can be extremely selfish, thinking only of what they want at that moment and not of the people that might end up getting hurt (like their mothers, or their innocent homies). This kind of selfishness is part of being a child, so when we read something like this, we recognize that you are beginning to think like a man. Don't stop.

Education Here In The Hall

Being seventeen and incarcerated for the first time in my life, I always attended school, so I pretty much know what we should be learning while attending school. So far, all I'm learning is the same things I already learned about.

I remember when I first came in, they asked me what grade I was in and what was the last grade I completed. I told them and they must not have heard me, I guess, because they put me in classes I have already completed. How is that helping me? What good does that do for me? Nothing.

I don't feel that they're really doing their best to make sure I learn what I'm supposed to learn, or what I need to learn. I feel that they should be doing more to make sure we are learning things we should be learning.

-Kristina, San Francisco

From The Beat: We have read this complaint now many times, so we are sure there is merit behind it. One of the worst areas of juvenile incarceration is the educational system, and you've put your finger on why — there's little ability to track where you've been or where you're going, so the education you get in here is cut off from what came before and what's coming after. The only solution is to get out of here and stay out of here, and graduate from high school!

Love Is A Drug

People would beg for the love of their life just the same way a dope fiend would beg to get a 10 shot when he only got 6 dollars
Love Is A Drug
Some people will kill for love just the same way a doper would fight another doper for a hit.
Love Is A Drug
Some people would give up their virginity to prove their love is true
Just the same way a crackhead would suck it for a blast
Love Is A Drug
Some person would buy the world to their girl just the way a dope fiend would sell all he got to satisfy his day.
Love Is A Drug
People cry when they lose their loved one just how crackhead realized they lost everything they love for smoking that glass pipe.
Love Is A drug
People don't realized their love of their life is in front of their faces as soon as the lost it just how dopers don't realized their dope fiends as soon as they don't got nothing left
Love Is A Drug

-Big Oso San Francisco

From The Beat: We often hear people write about love and sometimes it annoys us because we're aware of exactly what you're talking about. This is a very clever piece about how loving can be compared to a drug. What experiences have you gone through to come to this realization? Have you been heart broken before? Wh

Why Be an Extra Percent

I started selling bags of weed then school I was ditching
To slangin' coke on the block and cooking crack in the kitchen
They said I was wrong but I never listened
They said I'll end up dead or doing time in a prison
But it was all in my vision
I realized I was poor
I got blinded by money and still I wanted some more
But why life is fast if life's too short
I don't wanna die fast end up at the morgue
And leave my enemies happy while my family hurt
That my body is rotting six feet under the dirt
Then the way I'm remembered is my face on a shirt
Then my folks get caught up for tryin' to put in some work
Paranoia kickin' in, 'cause in my dreams I'm alone
My mentality crazy half my brain cells is gone
From thizz pills and cocaine and all the purple I've blown
That's why my lyrics is dope like a pipe packed with a stone
But I don't honor and brag about the shhh that I've done
My name is known in the hood up in the turf that I'm from
My heart solid to the core, I ain't gotta pretend
Tryin' to maintain in these streets don't wanna go to the pen
Why be another statistic? Why be an extra percent?

-Lil' Gumby, Alameda

From The Beat: The question, when you write this, is where do you stand on all this? We want to feel bad for your pain, especially when you write about it so well and with such skill – but by "solid to the core" does that mean that you just plan on keep going back to the same old BS. We can tell you have imagination, why not use it to find a better way to live?

It's a Consequence Behind Hurting Your love

Condition of a woman's original heart is only expense
Capable to be sensitive against any defense
Aggressive will turn into her cries and slit you into two
Developed a different woman you never thought you knew
Interest now has gone away, no more love to find
Too comfortable to see you as a substitute 'cause your so blind
She only want you to treat her like a queen and treat her right
But you act so dramatic to even talk to her a little bright
A young beautiful lady with a high potential with a dream
So busy getting hurt she relocatin' her intelligence as a queen
Delivering legendary knowledge of what to do to explore
And a stranger to this lady don't get a key to her heart's door
Emotional is what she is, required love is what she believes
Faithfully to her establish heart is love, what she'll receive
It's consequences behind anything that's gone bring a woman hurt
Celebration of tears all night in bed crying on your t-shirt
Mandatory she gon' do something to hurt you one day
But a special day where you'll have to pay
So treat that beautiful woman good before she walks out the door
And when she vanish that woman ain't coming back no more.

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: Yes indeed hurting a love one has consequences. It is best to be honest. It is best to communicate how you feel and not be selfish, 'cause in the end you'll be alone, and for many that means alone in a cell. Powerful truthful writing!

Seeking My Dad

The other day, staff asked by a show of hands who stays with their dad, and only two people out of 28 kids stay with their Dads.

You see, some people's dads are in jail or dead, but my dad isn't one of those things. You see, I live with my mom, but I want to stay with my dad. He lives only 45 minutes away, but for some reason he don't want me to live with him.

That's one of the reasons I think there are a lot of kids locked up now, because they don't have no father figure in their life. And as soon as you come to jail, everybody thinks you're here because you want to be here. I'm here because I want my dad's attention. Why are you here?!

-Cody, Alameda

From The Beat: That's a sad number you share with us. We know there is a real epidemic when it comes to missing fathers. Why do you suppose your father doesn't want you to live with him? Do you visit him? What is your relationship life? What about your mom? How does she feel about your father and your desire to live with him? Powerful commentary you deliver to The Beat. If anything we hope you get to connect with your dad.

Educate Yo' Mind

Lie here forever
So I'm a live it to the fullest
I wanna dodge balls
I don't wanna dodge bullets
Can I throw rocks
Instead of sellin' 'em to fiends if I could
I would rewind everything
I show in all fatigues 'cause I'm a natural born solja
First job I ever had was out sellin doja
Moms brought me up right
But I just didn't wanna listen
Rather watch Scarface
Cook crack up in her kitchen
When I was young my uncle told me boys don't cry
I cried when you left the earth, so that's a goddamn lie
Now I'm here
Rip D-Jess on a shirt
Won't even see ya face again 'cause you up under the dirt
Now I'm dressed in all black so they saying thug
Before I leave to hit the streets I give my momma a hug
She loves me but I think she loves me not
But if I get rich I'm gonna make sure she get a yacht
Piss in the pot you won't eat you don't grind
Really wanna whine
Go an educate ya mind
Crack cocaine, it's gon' sell, but that only lead to two things: Dead or in jail
RIP D-Jess, BoMesha Boon

-Dairy Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: The great wisdom in this piece comes from a great sadness: Your mother's tears, your lost loved ones. When you were younger, you didn't know any better. But now that you're older, you know the truth – does that mean you're ready to change your life?

The Pain in My Heart

The pain I have in my heart is unnoticeable. Nobody can see or feel my pain I have, 'cause I don't show it, but I know it's here with me. Every time I be in my room, all I do is think about my main squeeze and my family. I love keeping my lights off because it keeps me calm, and if I have my lights on, I be feeling like an animal.

Every time I go to court, I only get to see my family for five seconds and that's it. I'm on the van and I'm gone. When I see my girl and my family, I can see all the pain I put them through because of me and what I have done. My family thinks I can't see that they goin' through pain, but I do 'cause of they smiles. They be tryin' to act happy and all that bull. but I know. I know it's no more than a fake smile and a goodbye.

But it's love, true love, true love that never fails.

When I was comin' back here, my brother was following me, and when I had contact with my brother, I can see how sorry he is 'cause I'm in here. Me and my brother is real close, we like peanut butter and jelly without the bread. I been followin' my brother's footsteps for fifteen years, and all it got me is the wrong road, lookin' and searchin' for diamonds and gold.

I be tryin' to be in my family's shoes to see what kind of pain they have and … damn.

I wish I was out. 25 to life or 30 years with no strikes is my max. Damn, what have I done?

Knowin' I'm getting' taken away from my family, and my main swing. I wish I could die now, and feel no pain or suffer the pain in my heart. Seein' my family go through pain like me is crazy, 'cause I know they have even more pain in their heart than I do.

Knowin' my family can't do nothin' to get me out, but look at me and cry, just kills me 'cause it's all my fault. The pain in my heart.

-J-Money, Alameda

From The Beat: What an incredibly brave, powerful, and honest piece. About love: That love brings you pain, because you suffer with them, but that love will also keep you strong. Remember that you have it in your control to not serve a life sentence, which means that it will take all the strength you have, but you CAN work and strive for that day when you can be with your family again… an older and wiser and man. In the meantime, writing from the heart like you did today will help keep your heart strong.

In My Mind

Kickin' it with potnas smokin' a blunt
Dazzled by the rays of the sun
I'm the only one
That can decide
Is it better to avoid death only to
Suffer in life
Married to an ungrateful wife?
Keep doing what I do
I find myself in a ditch
Handcuffed, then locked up
Life is a bee
I want to live
Life full of respect
Things I done did
I'll always regret
Cutting class, sometimes even school
Just to give the impression that I'm cool
Hanging out on the streets
Making ninjas run
Holding on to the seat of their pants
Showing no remorse
Hurting people's feelings
If anger was length
I'd be as tall as the ceiling
But now I'm in jail
Feeling trapped in a cage
Full of rage
Ready to flip this page
And pass onto that
Savage phase
Called insanity
I'd like to go home
A place with friends, food and a phone
So I can fulfill my premonition
Home is any place
Except an institution

-Yogi, Alameda

From The Beat: Your title for this poem was perfect, because this poem feels like a perfect window into the heart and soul of what your life and hopes and dreams and fears. We know you're in conflict now, but we hope you find that path that will bring you to happiness.

I'm A DADDY'S Girl

Daddy, I miss you. I want to see you so bad. At court the other day, I saw your eyes get teary. I've caused you so much pain. I'm sorry that your little girl turned into the crazy rebellious Taurus that used to be so sweet and innocent.

You're my best friend, daddy. You know more about me that anybody else. I love the talks we used to have while cruising around everywhere. Daddy, thank you for being there and for never giving up on me. For always having at least a little faith in me to change for better. You always told me to play my game to be smart if I were going to screw up in this crazy-ass life. Daddy, I LOVE YOU.

Well, well with an x an o yo girl Cupcake gots to go.

- Cupcake, Santa Clara

From the Beat: It is truly rare for anyone, especially a young woman, to claim her Daddy as her best friend, so you should be proud. Your father seems to really love and stand by you.

People Of The World: Act Like A Family!

Hey Beat, I haven't written to you for about a year, but I have been locked up for a year and a half.

The topic today is "what's wrong with my people." I can think of a few things. First, people don't pay enough attention. Marriages drift apart, teens feel distant from their parents; it is because we don't listen to each other. We are constantly plagued with distractions; it is as if we aren't even living our lives. We need to be right now. We need to be more mindful of the things we say and do.

Second is desire. We always hear that "money can't buy happiness," and it's true. You don't need a car to be happy, what you need is love. Love isn't as plentiful as it used to be; we don't all get it. But we can always give it away.

Third is knowledge. Why, my brothers, did humanity go to the moon? As if we didn't have enough problems down here. Learning is a good thing, but some of us take it too far. Instead of learning things we don't need, why not master the things we do?

What society needs is a transformation, and it must start with you and me. There are too many hypocrites in today's world; don't just talk, act. My people are all the people of the world. Start acting like family.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thoughtful commentary. Why do you think many of us are so distracted with one another, particularly in our own families? How did it get to this point? Tell us about the love you have given away? As for learning the things we don't need, well that's what the world is all about, We are too smart for our own good, so we build spaceships to the moon, and forget about our children in our community. We can't agree with you more, that change starts with you! So do your part. If we all do the little things, it will make a huge difference. With that said, welcome back Monk!

Somebody Else's BLOCK

I don't call it my block. Why? "Cause it ain't my block. It don't belong to me. I don't care what you say, I say it's stupid. But everybody don't think like that. I'm not gone bust, sell, or ride for that worthless block. Call me a traitor, sucka, mark, square, or whatever. My life is too important to protect one city block or street that don't belong to me. I hold a lot more for myself than what this or that block holds for me.

A lot of y'all don't get it. And I ain't surprised. Brainless is what it is. You can't turn a butterfly back into a caterpillar. Everyone always says they not stupid. Ha. Funny thing is that you say that. Why people call it they block when they haven't put a cent to the block? Y'all might as well get married to whatever block y'all claim. Call it yo' girlfriend 'cause that's the only thing waiting for y'all. That's probably why y'all love it so much. On top of that, go ahead and invest and put some stock into it. Y'all call this a war. Go to a Third World country that's full of poverty.

-Tigger, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a powerful statement, we hear ya loud and clear. You bring up an interesting perspective in your piece regarding property. Why do people risk it all for the block, do you think? Is there a deeper reason, or is it simple foolishness?

Whales/People

To tell you the truth, I really don't give a damn about no whales. It's ninjas dyin' every day. It's kids starvin' in Africa, but there's more kids starvin' in ghettos in Oakland, Richmond, San Jose, Pittsburg and Marin City. Kids go to sleep wit' empty stomachs and dead dreams. Hopes shot down by people who told them they can't. Ninjas brought up in ghettos taught how to steal, how to kill, then get put in the system and taken to these halls. It makes me mad.

-Jordan, Marin

From The Beat: What do you propose that any of us, including you, can do to help the young people living on the edge who go to sleep starving every night, whether they're in Oakland or in Africa?

RIP Scooby

As time goes by, I think about how you ain't coming back. It kills me inside just to know how you living in another life. When they called us and gave us the bad news, I didn't cry because I had hopes that it was going to be a misunderstanding. I felt like I was going insane and I even thought about taking my life away. You left a family and two beautiful girls behind and now it's time for us to move on. My mom is so hurt! Why won't you just come and take me apart? You always chose your homies over your family, pero at the end the only one who cared was your family.

The day of your funeral everyone tried, until this day your family cried: "Life's a bitch and than you die!" The fool that had the balls to do the crime will pay by doing his time. It feels like I'm in a dream when I try to realize that you are gone. I know that you are watching down on you lil' sister that's loves you, as I try to move on. There is no one in this world that could replace you, although I have all the good and bad memories that we both went through. I thought that by getting high and drunk my pain for you will be gone. Once I'm coming down, no matter what, I will always carry you in my heart.

May you rest in peace because one day we will meet. In loving memory of Scooby! 12-12-87 – 12-03-06.

-Lizeth, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Sometimes the hardest part of losing a loved one is having to carry on with your life and feeling like you left that person behind. It sounds like you really felt that pain of losing your brother but you stayed strong for the rest of your family and your nieces. One day, you can tell them all about your brother and how much you loved him. There is no better way to honor him than by getting on the right track.

My Father

I never knew my father my whole life. I looked and looked and never found him. I looked high and low, from the East to the West for my father, but he was nowhere to be found.

I never realized he was there all along. He never left me. I was the one who left him. He kept on calling my name, trying to get me to find him and I finally looked up and heard him tell me he loves me and has been looking and waiting for me. So I went into my father's open arm and he told me: "I was here all along, my child and I'm glad you found me."

My father is not a human but a spirit. If you don't know who I'm talking about it's Jesus Christ. So thank you Father for all your love. I'm glad to know I could talk to my Father whenever I need him.

-Skull Head, Santa Clara

From the Beat: This is an amazing piece that really uses an element of surprise to talk about your own spiritual discovery. It's like you wrote a poem for God and it touches the heart no matter what faith the reader is.

I never realized he was there all along. He never left me. I was the one who left him.

What's Wrong With My People?

My people is everyone, Mankind. The human race, ethnicity and race doesn't separate people but people separate people, that's what's wrong with my people.

People create weapons and use them to hurt and kill people and others. That's what's wrong with my people, people created money and used it as a way to live, to make life revolve around ad solely money, money that cause not only a good life but a messed up life, that's what's wrong with my people, people who obtain power uses them for their own reasons and selfish pride, that's what's wrong with my people, my people has created and made good things in life, but my people has also caused chaos and destruction of their own and other people's lives.

-John Santa Clara

From The Beat: You are really a great thinker. While most people are caught up in their own little boxes, you think outside the box and observe with a harmonious mind. Since money and guns seem to be huge problems with our race, the human race, what do you suggest as solutions? We're asking you because we really respect your opinion and can tell from this piece that your intelligence is outmatched.

When I Open My Eyes

When I open my eyes to face the hood
I got feelings inside some bad some good
Some bitter yet sweet
This particular morning
The sun setting relaxes me
The intense morning air enhances me
I don't quite understand the situation at hand
I am relaxed
Widened eyes clearly open
My voice will sing with the cool soft breeze of a wind
Today someone will be rewarded a token
I am imagination
I am dream — I am real — not a scene
I am hard, I am soft — I am found, I am lost.
When I open my eyes to face this hood
I got feelings inside some bad some good
Some bitter yet sweet. This particular morning
The sun setting relaxes me, the intense morning air enhances me.

-Anonymous Alameda

From The Beat: You say you have both bad feelings and good feelings towards the block, why do you think that is so? Do the good feelings outweigh the bad ones or is it the other way around? When you compare the good with the bad, what do you come up with? We've learned that when we try and play both sides of the fence, good and bad, we still usually get the consequences of the bad, so please be careful...

I Can't Hug My Mom Through Glass

I like all of them. But the one that hurts most is when my mom visits and I can't touch her. I wish I could have touched her, hugged her, kissed her and told her that I love her more than anyone.

Phone calls they are OK, but they sometimes don't accept calls, but you get to talk to your "loved ones".

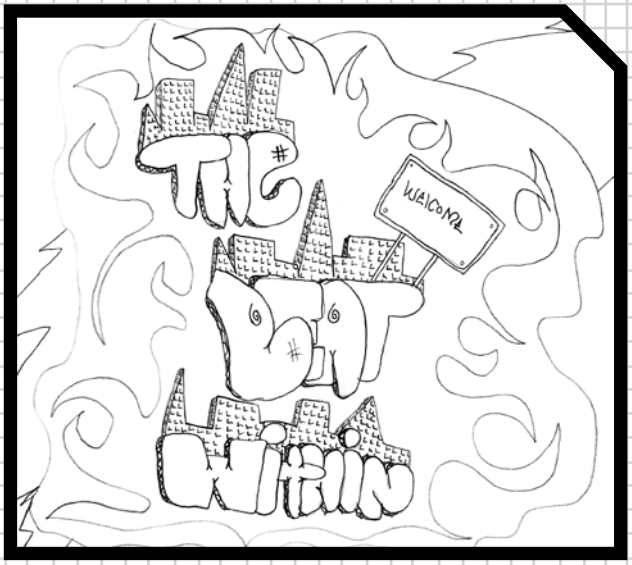
Letters, those are OK, so they can send you pictures and that's why I need to see: My loved ones.

I wish my brother and lil' sister could come visit me. Being behind glass it is not the best way to talk to your loved ones. There's a metal stall, and when you are trying to talk, you can't hear nothing because there are too many people talking. They give you your snack that you're parents get you, but I'd rather just get to touch my loved ones.

Well, that's how I feel.

-Edgar, Alameda

From The Beat: Your parents would be happy to read this, and to see how much you care about them. Soon that glass will be gone, and you'll be back with your family where no one can separate you from them again, so long as you stay true to yourself.



Deceased

My dad is dead, done in by all the liquor and drugs that he did.

He wasn't completely a bad guy, he taught me how to fight. I'm sure I'm the way I am today, because he gave me the bases for my morals and attitude.

I say I won't turn out like dad but right now I'm turning out just like him. First time getting locked up he was in for five years, and I'm looking at four.

I promise myself I'd never treat my kids like he treated me and my brother. I'll be a better father then mines.

-Blizz, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If your pops was around to at least to teach you morals and attitude and how to fight, then take it and run with it. Because there are people in this life that don't even get the chance to meet their father. Your pops might not be the best pops in the world but he tried and you can learn from his mistakes and use it to better yourself as a son, person and like you said a better father for your future kids.

RIP Dad

My Dad was there for me as much as he could be before he got killed.

I had a good father, even though he was always out there getting' it. He always made sure his son had what he needed and that he was safe. My dad was killed in 1996 when I was still hella little. But I remember all of the things he's done for me. Sometimes I wonder if he was still alive would I be in the position that I'm in right now. RIP Mike, from your son Little Mikey

-Young Chip, Alameda

From The Beat: You make a great point asking this question—because it's truth that a father can do so much to teach his son right from wrong, smart from stupid, safe from suicidal. Now you must find other teachers who show you a positive way. Where will you find them? And how? They're out there, so how will you seek them out?

There's a metal stall, and when you are trying to talk, you can't hear nothing because there are too many people talking.

You May Have It Bad, But There's Always Someone Out There Who Has It Worse

Never really had a father while I was growing up.
He was always in and out of jail.
He never really claimed me as his own.
Always on the run, moving from house to house,
living in hotels, cars, or maybe a friend's pad.
Sometime we had struggles to find food.
Me and my sister always hustling to help my mom.
A single parent trying to stay strong for her lil' ones,
holding back the tears and all the pain.
It was hard but we didn't give up.
I looked to the Lord and tried to blame Him,
when really it was my dad at fault.
He gave us a bad reputation, and bad credit.
Getting evicted out of the pads.
It was a struggle to try to get a home of our own;
transportation was a bitch, bus fare just kept rising.
My lil' brother was very young and didn't know what was up,
too young to comprehend.
My two older sisters trying to do good in school to escape the life we live.
My mother working two jobs as a full-time worker.
And as for me, all my feelings bottled up, full of anger, ready to explode.
A broken up family full of pain and hard time
we over came all the struggles and my dad is back in the picture trying

-Young daughter, Santa Clara

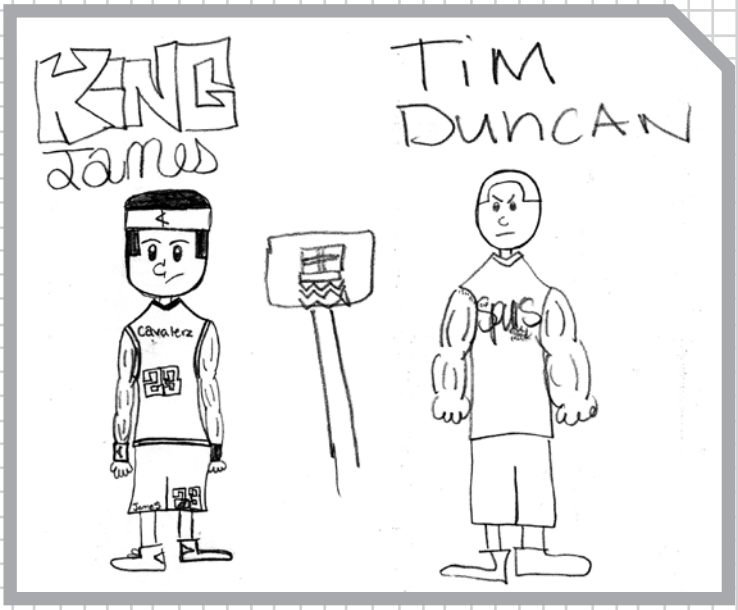
From The Beat: You courageously deliver a vivid picture of what your life was like for you and your family. We are glad to hear in the end that dad is trying to get it together, and we hope you too do more than try to get your life back on track too. Best to you and your family!

As I Bleed, I Have A Slow Leak

I am standing here thinking
Watching time kill me slowly
As I bleed, I realize I have a slow leak
Feeling kind of empty, like a horn that can't beep
Like a ghost that can't sleep
The baby that can't weep
I am a killer that can't creep
I love life, but I hate its nasty turns
It's like I am in school, but I can't learn
Put gas on my fire and it still won't burn
But I still haven't figured out the lesson to learn
My brain is like a worm
It's going through dirt
And my heart is like a dummy
It has taken a lot of hurt
The burning keeps my skin on fire
And in the streets, it's a lot of killing
It's like we watching the Wire
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: Why is time killing you slowly? Do you feel your life is stuck because you're down? If you were on the outs, what would you be doing? What has hurt you so deeply? How to you assuage your pain? Or have you just learned to live with it?



What's Wrong with My Gente

Man, what's wrong with my gente
Why are they slippin' instead of using their mente
We should rise up instead of fightin' each other
What happened to the times that we showed respect and gave a hand to another
Education is a key to change all our ways
But instead, we sit with our glocks, prayin' for better days
Man, are we slippin', lettin' the system get us down
We should beat them at their own games
And find ways to turn around
There's got to be something that our people can do
'Cause I know with a little strife and faith, our dreams will come true
Now let's stand up for our rights
'Cause I know if we could, we would win the good fight

-Chimy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Well, your gente is using their minds, but in the wrong way! Hopefully many will wkae up before it's too late. Chimy, is starts with you doing your part. Act on it!

My Dad

One day I was on the block and my mom rode up on me and was acting like somebody else. I walked off, and she said "Come here, boy! This is your momma and daddy!" So I went with them to the house, but to remind you: I hadn't seen my dad in five years.

So we went to the house, and when we got to the house, we talked for a minute and he said "I'm going to Mickey D's. I'll be back." Then, hours went by, and he never showed up and months later I heard he went to jail. And months after that, he died in there.

-Lil' Beezo, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a heartbreaking story. We can only imagine that both of your parents were going through a lot of confusion and were trying to do the right thing that day. However, it must have been very painful to wait for your dad that day, after such a long separation, only to have him never return. As you become a young man yourself, try to understand him and perhaps even to forgive him. Even when our hearts have been broken, we have a tremendous ability to heal.

Forms Of Communication

The importance of communication while locked up should be greatly valued no matter what. I will forever remember and cherish everyone that kept in contact with me. It doesn't matter how people try to communicate with me in here as long as they do because that's basically my reassurance that there are people that care about me. Without mail, phone calls, and visits, I wouldn't know what I would do. Sometimes when I get mail, phone calls, and visits from family and friends, it makes me feel like they're locked up with me. I love them for that.

-Baby, San Francisco

From The Beat: You really mapped out why it's important for people to keep in contact with their loved ones who are locked up. We know that any form of communication is special when you're locked up, but if you had to pick one, what would it be? Have you ever had communication to the outside that wasn't good while you were locked up?

What's Wrong With My People? NOTHING

What's up Beat. Well what I'm talking about is "my people" Shhh, ain't nothing wrong with my people, it's just some of their actions. I know plenty of minorities, that's doing good for himself. Take E. for example, he is always on his job and teaching me a better way.

My step dad went from being one of the biggest drug dealers in Oakland to having two fulltime jobs and owning two houses! So when you ask me what's wrong with my people, I say "nothing" because everyone does sinful things, no matter if they brown, yellow, pink, purple or blue. And everyone can use improvement, no matter who they are. As far as me, I got a plan, 'cause with a plan I will never fail, but without a plan I will plan to fail.

So in conclusion, nothing is wrong with my people. It's just the things that people do are wrong.

-Lil' Tonio, Alameda

From The Beat: As always, Tonio, your words sing out with clarity and strength. We appreciate your argument and are proud to print it. Now, on to your plan – it's time to put this plan down in detail, every little bit of it. Will you do this, so we can publish it in The Beat for others to learn from?

Then, hours went by, and he never showed up and months later I heard he went to jail. And months after that, he died in there.

This Block Is Everything

On the block everything is everything. Growing up in the hood there's only three ways out, having your ball game on lock, spittin' a couple rhymes, or pushin' weight.

It's the life, but it comes a point in every man's life where you gotta make a decision either to stay in poverty or get out of it.

They say we drug deal just to get by, but for us it's a negative and positive that comes out of it. Stackin' your money to the sky, yeah it's coo' but just remember there's somebody out there to take you off the map. Its rough, I know, but hey if I don't do, somebody else will.

The positive outcome of it all is you bringing money in the house, paying some of the bills, because moms only works one job and you got little brothers and sister to take care of, and moms don't care 'cause her baby boy out there bringing money to the table 'cause his bum ass dad ain't nowhere to be found, but life moves on you gotta do what you gotta do to eat right?

The white man say we wasn't supposed to make it pass twenty-one but we out here. As you see the outcome becomes being behind bars. This life hurts, but I'm a soldier so I'm gonna survive.

This gotta change, I wanna be the guy who calls the shots in the office instead of being a compo in the street. I wanna expand my brain and be the HNIC (Head Ninja In Charge) with the fancy shhh on and come back to the hood to show youngtas that money is not the ticket and education is the golden pass in this here world.

-Smf, Santa Clara

-From The Beat: Good job! Even though you out there on the streets getting it how you live you got good morals! But you know when you out there you are risking your entire life not only behind bars but you could also lose it permanently. We don't want that to happen to you, neither does anybody in your family, 'cause they really need you. Like you said, man there are other legit ways to get that doe! Have some patience and stay positive so you can work hard to have that office job and be the head ninja in charge.

My Obituary

Jonathan was a well-respected business man. He leaves behind a son and beautiful wife. He lived a good life even though it didn't start that way. He struggled with drugs, and gangs early on, but passed it all and lived a long life.

He is not remembered by his troubles, but he is remembered by the many accomplishments that he had, and he will never be forgotten.

He will always live on in the hearts of his family.

-Jonathan, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's very sad when an obituary is written or read. Change your way of life, and when the day comes let your accomplishments drown out your struggles, so they're not even mentioned. Let your son hold his head high and be proud of all his father's accomplishments.

Trapped Whales

I think people care more about the whales' struggle because the whales are trapped, while we're here due to choices we made. They look at us as criminals which are seen as monsters, the scum of society. While the whales are gentle creatures of the ocean that you rarely get the opportunity to see in the wild. I think if something tragic were to happen to us up here, maybe people would show some concern.

-K, San Francisco

From The Beat: Maybe you are in here for the bad choices you made (of course, the whales also made the bad choice to swim up river), but what about before you got here. Did you ever feel that you were trapped in a place and in a kind of life that you didn't have much control in making?

Choose Wisely

As children we learn many things by playing with other children, by being scolded by our parents or other adults when we misbehave, and by our own experiences. But things happen along the way and sometimes we forget the lessons of our childhood.

One thing I was told many times as a child is to always choose friends wisely. I, of course, never listened, but it's a lesson I've learned all by myself. Choose your friends wisely. That's now what I do. And I know it will show when I get back to the outs.

-Kristin, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Some lessons we learn the hard way. Sounds like this happened to you. And it sounds like you're ready to give your new knowledge a test run. Best of luck to you.

The Price Of Happiness

Money was never an important thing in my family. At least it didn't seem like it until my dad left when I was a young teen and the money seemed to go with him.

He left me, my mom, and my sister with nothing, but a house mortgage and bills to pay.

At first my family didn't seem to change, but when my mom started working many-many hours a day just to keep the house, I knew I had to do something to change that.

When I first started selling drugs I only thought of the money that would make my family happy, but not of the freedom I could lose.

Less than a year after I started slanging I was arrested for my first distribution charge, for this I was put on probation and didn't have to spend time in jail because I was caught with bud instead of something else.

Three years later here I am and I am now realizing that my family were happier when I was out of trouble then when I was in and out of jail, so for me money did not bring happiness.

-Nathan, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: The main problem now days, teens that get put into your situation only see the easy money. They don't see the big picture, and where drug money will get them. As you said all you thought of was the easy money, not the true pain and suffering your mother and sister would have to go through while you were behind bars.

Growing Up

As a kid I never met my father. Every birthday, Christmas, Thanksgiving I never sat around wondering why my father came around.

I grew up accepting the flaws that are believed to make me stronger as a person.

I don't blame my father for my mom working ten hours a day. I don't blame my father for us not having enough money, nor making my older brother go to the marines even though I know he could have done better. I don't blame him for not being there, making me bad, ending up in jail.

I am no longer mad, but happy to have friends and family. Growing up I love the people that love me. My father isn't dead, but he will always be engraved on my back. I ain't gonna stop by and visit him. I won't look back, but all I can do is grow up and move forward.

-Lai, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You are not bad, you made a mistake, everybody makes mistakes. Learn from your mistakes, get out and help your mama out. Go visit your dad, let him know how you feel. Move forward in a positive direction don't get caught making the same mistakes, and show those who really love you that you are serious about leading a healthy life!

My Loving Mom

Hey, Beat, what's up? It's young Skull Head from San Jose. I'm just stopping by to let my moms know that I love her. Without her, I would mostly be dead. When no one wanted me, she took me in even though I wasn't her kid.

Mom, I'm sorry that I hurt you so much. I know you took me in when no one wanted to, and because you wanted to help me. Even though you didn't know me, you still showed me love. You showed me love no matter how wrong I did, and the crazy thing is that I was not even your kid. So when you told me you loved me, I knew it was true. You kept taking care of me even though I was not showing you that I was grateful for everything you've done for me.

So, just to let you know, I'm thankful that you took care of me despite your own problems. I love you MOMS and consider you my real mom even though you didn't give birth to me. But you gave me more than life, you gave me your love: something I was seeking for my whole life. All I could really say is I'm so thankful, now I feel good about living and carrying on because of your love. I love you, Mom

-Your lil' girl Skull Head, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Having someone care for you who isn't blood-related can sometimes be more powerful than if you came out of someone's womb; and sometimes it takes being locked up to really realize how much our caretakers did for us. Now that you realize how much you have to be thankful for, how do you think you're going to express this when you see your mom next?

My Dad

My Dad was strong
My Dad quit school, yet was very smart
My Dad had a bad childhood and was homeless
My Dad came up and started a business
My Dad lost it due to drugs
My Dad cleaned up and did his best
My Dad fell back into using drugs and died.

-Bugs, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Sorry for the loss of your father. This is the main reason the emphasis against drugs is so strong. Doing drugs will generally give you one of two results, Prison time or Death. Make a difference, Bugs, get an education, stay away from drugs and excel in life.

When I Am On My Block

When I am on my block I see...
Everyone chillin' having a good time
When I am on my block I see...
Myself trying to bubble up and get mine
When I am on my block I see...
Traffic and money coming in and out
When I am on my block I see...
My hood letting everyone know what we are about
When I am on my block I see...
Cops and the feds always tryin' to roll up
When I am on my block I see...
Fools trying to run up but get shut the hell up
When I am on my block I see...
Homies throwing steak in the BBQ grills
When I am on my block I see...
The females jockin' us and trying to chill
When I am on my block I see...
Us as a family always together
When I am on my block I see...
Ourselves putting our trust in each other
When I am on my block I see...
Nothing but love and no hatred
When I am on my block I see...
People trying to make sure no time is wasted...

-Chuccy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a complicated block. At one point in your piece you write about cops and fools, but then you also write about BBQs and love. We wonder what the best part of your block is and the worst part of your block is? The way people are impacted by their experiences from the block is definitely complicated. How are you impacted by your experiences from your block?

My Pops

When I was two, my pops got kicked out when my mom found out he was doing hella drugs. Then went life for me! I didn't see my dad for a couple of years.

When I was six years old, my dad came out of nowhere. It was random how he just popped up and started caring.

Now he has been in my life a lot and it is because he always wanted to be there for me but it was me just pushing him away. My dad always wanted me to chill with him. Don't get me wrong, I did go and see him every once and a while. It is both our faults, but now I wish I was always there!

On my father's side, my grandpa is hella sick and my dad told me a year ago that he was suppose to be passing on. Now that I am in here, my family hasn't told me what has been going on with him. M

y dad comes to visit me when he can. He has a new job and I am proud of my dad. I also love him and I always will.

-Evek, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We bet your dad would be happy to hear that you are proud of him. People seem to be most sensitive to what their families think of them. Hope you get the story about your grandfather soon. Thanks for sharing about your connection to your father and we hope you do everything possible to be there for him and yourself.

Money Buys Desires

Money can buy what people desire. True happiness comes from the person within you in your situation. Money can't buy happiness but some people will do anything to get money to get what they desire, and sometimes you can end up locked up in jail. But there's more to life than just material things.

-Zoom, San Francisco

From The Beat: Tell us about the person within you, the one who appreciates that there's more in life than material things.

My Dad

This topic is hard for me to write 'cause I never had a dad. He was never there. He chose the crack rock instead of being a dad to me and my bro. He'd rather be in prison instead of at least trying to be a dad. But I can't blame him.

Once you get addicted, it's hard to stop. So in a kind of way, he helped me, because he showed me that I never want to end up like him, addicted to the rock and in prison for life.

Soon my daughter will be born and I'm never gonna fail her. I'm going to be there whenever she needs me. I don't want my daughter to go through what I had to go through. So I'm through with this life of committing stupid crimes and getting locked up.

-Kevin, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We admire that you are turning a bad situation on it's head and getting something good out of it. At some point, when you have your life together and your family is doing well, you could think about corresponding with your dad. But that's a decision to make when you are in a better position. Right now, your job is to become the person you want to be. We have a pretty good feeling about that.

Just a Lil' Something For My Momma

The lost time, the struggles, the tears, and all the pain…
it seems like the baby of the family just keeps messin' up no matter how much I try,
it never seems to be enough. No matter how many times I say "I'm gonna do good, trust,"
I end up doing bad. As much as I say sorry,
I seem to keep going back to bad habits.
But this time it ain't no lie, I'm gonna do what I gotta do: focus in school, be coo' off the homies, and stick to family.
I listen to the man above, keeping my head up high, keepin' it real, and doing me on my own hype.
I promise you this, Mom, you got your baby girl back.
Never shall I fall again, never shall I choose the wrong path,
never shall I leave. I'm sorry for the lost time and what you had to put up with,
but I don't regret what I have done in the past. I believe everything happens for a reason. And I'm not going to sing my should have, could have, would have.
I'm here on lockdown for a reason.
I learn from my mistakes and better myself each and every day.
I'm tired of my lil' uso always askin' you why Nono ain't there.
young uso, I'm gonna be there to the end. I promise you that.
Mom, don't get it twisted, what I say is what I mean.
So know that when I get out, your lil' girl's going to be there 24/7.

-Noel, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Being the baby of the family can feel like everyone is just waiting for you to mess up, especially if you've already proved yourself in that way. How do you plan to break out of the patterns that you've been trapped in so far? Keeping your Mom in your thoughts is a good way to stay positive.

I See

I see kids with no mothers or fathers
I see people on the corner
I see mothers crying
I see lil' bra thuggin'
I see people without money
I see troubled children
I see kids having kids
I see my family struggle

-Greg, San Francisco

From The Beat: These are such simple sentences, but they carry such profound weight. These things should not exist in this rich country. What can we do about it?

Money Can — And Can't — Buy Happiness

Money can and can't buy happiness. Money can buy happiness because you can get what you want and that can make you happy for the moment. But I can definitely be happy without money. I would rather have one dollar to my name and have my family than to have all the money in the world. I can be homeless living in an ally and have my family and would be the happiest person in the world. Familia means more to me than money ever will.

-C

From The Beat: It's interesting how many people say that family means everything to them, and yet they do things that let the system take them away from those that mean so much. We agree with you that a loving family is worth more than a fortune in diamonds, but what can you do to hold onto that treasure?

Vicious Cycle

What's wrong with my people?
What's wrong with my people?
My people think too much of who's the baddest, who's the strongest.
We have too much to prove.
The gang life seems the thing to do.
We want respect, but we don't get respect, we get fear by others.
We might get respect by our homies, but what is it all worth?
Guns, drugs, and violence. The only way we retire is if we pass away,
there is no future, but still we try to be the most feared.
It's a vicious cycle that will never end.

-Jonathan, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: "It's a vicious cycle that will never end." The last statement you made couldn't be more wrong. The vicious cycle can end, an end that has to start with you and other young adults like yourself. Respect can only be received when respect is given, change the vicious cycle. Leave the drugs, guns and gangs by getting an honest job. Work your way to the top and earn the true respect you deserve. Change the vicious cycle for your people, but most of all change it for yourself.

Can Money Buy Happiness?

Yes and no! And the reason why I say that is because with money, you can buy cars and clothes and that makes you happy. But it can't make you happy because money can also stress you out too. With money you see friends and family want more and try to be with you now that you have money. But when you was broke, nobody cared or didn't want to be bothered.

-CJ, San Francisco

From The Beat: Most people are blinded by the things that money can buy, so they don't see things as clearly as you. There's an old song called "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" that captures exactly what you wrote about.

This I Deserve

What I deserve is a better life because the way my life is all messed up.

I had a mom and dad who were bad on drugs and didn't care about me or my sisters. Just cared about getting high and that's what I believe I deserved when I was little.

I had to go out and steal and get money to feed me and my sisters, and if I had a better life I don't think I would be in here right now writing this, about my life. I did what I had to do for me and my sisters to survive that's why I' deserve a better life.

-Vincent, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: With what you say, you are right you do deserve a better life. No child should be brought into this world to be a parent to their siblings. Your mom and Dad should have been the ones to feed, cloth and love you as a child, not the other way around.

What I Have To Relearn

When I get out, some of the things I got to relearn is that I got to do what my parents tell me because they ain't going to tell me nothing wrong. I'm also going to relearn how to conduct myself as a person and learn how to function in society, how to not mess up and learn the rules to the outside instead of functioning by the rules on the inside.

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you take these goals seriously, you will move from childhood into adulthood. Don't forget when you're able to make your own choices again.

I Could Care Less

My dad to me is dead, a bitch, trash. I could care less if he tries to get to know me, it's too late, I'm seventeen now, almost a man.

It's weird though I'm still cool wit' my brother and my brother lives with my father. My father knows where to find me, but just chooses not to get to know me. Before I would get mad thinking about it, but now I see I didn't need him in my life anyway. Really who needs a drug dealer who stays in –and out of jail?

My dad is not a man. I remember seeing my brother and he telling me that our dad broke his shhh, 'cause my brother got kick out of the game and they lost.

It would have been cool to have known my dad but screw it I'm doing coo' without him.

-Cherry Bombs, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You say your father chooses not to get to know you and he knows where to find you, but have you ever thought about getting to know him. Have you tried too? What happened? Do you think he might be thinking the same thing you thinking? IF you have also tried to connect then your whole life is gonna pass without at least a conversation because you think that he doesn't wanna get to know you and he thinks that you won't even give him a chance. Why don't you be a bridge between the gap and try? And if he still don't try to get to know you then at least you can live with the fact that at least you tried.

Taking Education Seriously

When I was in the outs, I never took education seriously. I was too busy doing my things (gang bangin'). It's cool that I have this education here. On the outs, I don't go to school because I was kicked out.

Education is the most important thing. People like us get educated so we can make better money. School here is cool because you have nothing else to do.

Right now, I am a freshman in high school. I never truly got to experience high school because I got kicked out. The hardest part for me in school is listening. There's way too many distractions. To all in here, make your time worthwhile.

-Cisco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If education is so important, why don't people take it more seriously? Did you get kicked out for fighting, or for other reasons? Are you planning to return to high school when you're out of here? After all, if education is important in here, it's even more important out there.

Can Money Buy Happiness?

Yes, money can buy us cars, houses, jewelry and clothes. No, money can't buy us happiness. If you buy jewelry for a girl, she could screw you over. In our families, people can be selfish and keep asking for money. And you can stress about the stupid stuff. That's why money can't buy you happiness. What makes people happy is that people love them for who they are, not how much money they have.

-Creeper, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Money can save us in many situations, but it can also bring out the worst in people. Do you have the gift of a loving family? How can we spread that feeling around, so that we see in every human being the things that connect us, and the things that we all want to be loved for?

Taking Things For Granted

I got locked up before for some mistake. I took everything I had for granted. Things started to go down hill. I saw it happening.

While I was incarcerated before, I told myself that it was the last time and that I needed to change my old habits and have new ones. When I was released, I fell back into that hole again. I started to mess up again.

Now I'm back in the max-unit. Just to let you all know, I am not going to BS to myself anymore. Really, this time, I am changing for the better. I need time to do it. Hope everything goes well for everybody and me. Remember, one life to live, live it to the fullest.

-Trau, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We absolutely believe your promise to change for the better. But the problem is that it's so much easier to make that promise when you don't have the freedom to make choices than it is to keep that promise when you do. Tell us some of the specific changes you plan to make when you are free to make your own decisions again.

The World has Changed For The Worst

Life is a total mess and it is due to mass chaos
Children being neglected while their parents are gone days
They are stuck and lost in a world of criminal minded face-off
They just can't stop the drugs they're doing!
Who knows how they are using
They're probably passing on a disease from dirty Needles and now polluting
Those irresponsible acts comes from those unforgettable paths inside of the rotten cranium cracks
Which once pictured a perfect place
Until those cravings just get a grasp and take hold of Their soul till those lonely days get old
Heart turned cold with yourself stuck in a hole
Wishing that they would've sold their drugs
Instead of becoming addicts, raging out of control
Why have we fallen beneath the devil's lair?
It's because of those knuckle-heads who be building up anger without a care
Abandoning young teens that will grow up adolescents Roaming streets with no protection
Now convicts who grew up without a dad
Who were the ones who pointed them in that direction of a destructive path
Now get a glimpse
Just take a look at the world that is around you!
Don't trust anyone but your family, God, and yourself.

-Thoughts Of Wisdom, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Yes, too many adults think that it is okay to treat their kids however they want. Then kids grow up and think that it is okay to treat all people however they want. What could help families the most to raise their children in a way that helps them become successful adults?

My Obituary

I want to lead a good, normal life and want to achieve or do something that when after I'm gone people remember me. I want my obituary to say that I did something that made people proud for doing the right thing and had at least helped someone out.

When I am gone, I want my obituary to say that I graduated high school, was a great brother and son, had a beautiful wife with kids, was in the Army National Guard and had saved someone, I was one of the best homies, and had worked very hard to support my family. Live life to the fullest because it's only one life to live.

-Trau G, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What are you doing now to reach these wonderful goals that you want to be remembered for? They are within your grasp, if only you reach out and do what you have to do to achieve them!

Whales Vs People

Man, I thought this subject would be like a whale vs. a human, it sounds pretty dumb, but the real subject is, "Do people care more about whales than they care about other people?" Man oh man.

Well, I say that people do care more about whales because they got it on mostly every news channels some whales have been on the news. But see, the thing that I don't get is that out here in the city and across that bridge people are dying constantly. But you don't see none of that on the news, or don't really care about us. I mean they might, but it isn't a problem to them.

Do people care more about whales than other human beings? Good question Beat. The truth is people care about whales more than the next person. That's how I feel. Tone Kiki out!

-Tone Kiki, San Francisco

From The Beat: It does seem to us that people's hearts go out to endangered animals, but their hearts hardly ever go out to endangered human beings (unless they look like them). What about you, Tone, do you feel more for the whale or for people who are struggling to swim back into the world.

Wanting It Now

I think that everyone is caught up in the moment and they just want what they can't have. So they find a way to steal it. When you get into a gang, you don't think about the future. You want the money, the drugs, the girls, etc.

But, what are you getting out of all that? You don't need drugs to get a woman. You just end up getting into trouble and end up in jail. Once you get here, where are all your girls? Where is all your money? Gone. Who can you go to for help now? You have lost everything.

You need to spend time with your family because once you end up here, your family is who you have to turn to for help You should think about what you're getting into before you make decisions. There's more to life than this.

-Bartender, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There is a lot of wisdom in what you wrote, Bartender. It does seem like far too many young people claim to love everything about their lives — family, homies, girls, etc. — but then risk it all by doing childish things whose consequences they instantly regret. If a boy really likes girls, why's he putting himself in a room full of boys? If you truly love your family, why do something that takes you from them, unless you love something else even more? Do you have any suggestions, for yourself or others in your situation, to start making better decisions for a better future?

What's Wrong With My People

What's wrong is that all of the younger generation wanna just kill each other than love each other. But all of us say that we love a God that we never seen, but we hate our brothers and sisters that we see every day.

All we really need to do is look out for each other and do things that you would be proud you should be a cool person. But when someone step on your toes. you should do whatever necessary. But if you have power you should never abuse it because what goes around comes around.

-Fred B, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a very thoughtful piece of writing, Fred. Why do you think it's so hard for us to do something as simple as looking out for each other?

Whales Vs. People

Whales in the Bay trynna make they way back but, we trap in jail trynna make our way out. Hundreds of people lined up trynna help the poor whale out; we locked up, people don't give a dam about us lock up. Whale trapped in the Bay. This shhh been on the news for over two days now. We gotta show called Juvy, but I'm sure nobody really watches it. So what I think yeah, whales win. People do care about whales more then people, I wonder why?

-Zoom, San Francisco

From The Beat: In a way, it's easier to care about whales than people. There's nothing we can do about the whales that get lost in the Bay. They're pretty much on their own, and even if they can use help, it's not the kind of help we can give as individuals. People in trouble, on the other hand, can be helped, but only if other people see the traps their in and want to help.

On Being A Good Friend

As a young kid, one of the most important things we had to learn was how to be a good friend. Being a good friend works hand in hand with being a good person. The traits required are taught to us as we grow older by our parents, family, teachers, and peers.

As a lil kid, being a good friend is different than being a good friend as you grow older. Now, as a young adult, being a good friend is a lot different. Although all the traits required are not viewed all positive by the authorities, they are important to me.

Throughout my life, I have lost many friends, not because that changed, but because they become who they truly are. Something I had to relearn over and over was how to be a good friend, and how to choose a friend.

-Khi, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is really interesting, Khi. We wonder how many people think as deeply about friendship as you have. How do you choose your friends carefully? What do you do to improve your own qualities of being a good friend?

My Kid

Some day in the future, I will have a kid. I am going to try my best to prevent him from doing what I did. Everyone knows it is really difficult growing up in da 'hood. I'll make sure my kid knows the difference between good and bad.

As a parent, it is definitely right for a parent to do the best he can. So what I am going to do is teach him the facts of discipline. My kid will always think of me when he wants to win.

My dad's mistake has been living where we still do. My important fact will be moving out, letting my kid know what the other world is about.

-Chuccy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What beautiful thinking Chuccy. How will you find the money to move out of the 'hood and raise your children in a better environment? What kind of job do you want to do?

Money Can Buy A Lot — But Not Happiness

Money is the type of thing that can buy cars and shoes, but man, in sum, money cannot buy happiness. Happiness comes from the heart and money has nothing to do with the heart. I wish I knew this a minute ago because money was what I was always trying to get, thinking that "this is going to make me smile." In the process, I lost the one female I love and I don't think I'll ever get her back!

-Lil' Jon, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Losing a female you love is a heavy price to pay to learn a lesson, but if the lesson is truly learned, maybe it was worth the price. When you get out of here, how will the lesson you've learned change how you live your life? Money is important for life, but there are other things that give life its meaning. How do you plan to get enough money to live, but to live in a way that guarantees your freedom and your long life?

Who Died Last Night?

When I wake up in the morning, all I could think of is who died last night. My people are messing up with each other and all we do is fight. Nowadays, I can't even walk down the street without looking over my back. I tell myself I got to stay strapped. You see, that's the problem now. Always gang banging, slanging. All I can say is that this is what the world is going to be about. That's all you are hearing out of people's mouth. Gangs, drugs, etc…

All we are trying to do is live life as thugs. A lot of my people do not look toward education, just the stupid shhh about incarceration. Everyone else looks at us and says, "What's going through their heads?" I guess all that is seen is just an ignorant mess. As an individual, I think we should at least be all treated equal. Just because of our color we are judged as wrong. I just try to tell myself this won't be lasting long! But dang, what the hell is wrong with my people?

-Chuccy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It seems like you have identified two problems here. The first is how people look at you and at "your people," judging "them" as if they are all doing ignorant or wrong things. We know far too many people of color (even those who've come from the same circumstances as you) who are in college, working legit. jobs, and doing what good citizens do to believe that stereotype. But the other problem has to do with so many young people who have given up on themselves and who think their future lies in the hustle instead of in the school. That is a problem that you can act on directly in your own life. Have you given up on education as the key to your future? We sure hope not.

Money, Money, Money!

Money is important to me. I definitely love it. But honestly in my heart it boils down to money ain't a priority to me. In my life I'm not worry about it, because it comes and goes. and I feel my life is more important than anything especially money.

I'm really happy without it because money bring problems, and I rather have no problems with money, just be happy without it and be happy by living another day with family and loved ones. So money don't make me happy getting through life every day to see light just keep me happy.

-Jay Pitt, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're glad that you can find happiness in the company of people who love you and who you love. That's a treasure that too few people recognize they have until it's gone.

My Views On Education In Da Hall

I'm an 18-year-old guy who is stuck in the hall. When I was out, I got sucked into a whirlwind: using, getting faded, driving drunk, getting arrested, and ditching school. None of that is to be proud of. Look where it got me.

I am glad and proud of the education in the hall. I've started reading again while I hope to continue when I am released. To answer the question about whether education here is good or bad, I would say it depends on the person.

Whether people want to learn or not is important. Personally, I think it's great, but I wouldn't be doing it if I wasn't in here. Another thing that is cool is the population. There is not as many kids per teacher. This gives more one-on-one time.

-RJ, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If you're a reader, you'll find that you'll do more to educate yourself than all the schooling you'll get in your lifetime. What do you like to read? One thing you said raised our eyebrows… Why wouldn't you be want to learn if you were out there? That seems the place where learning is the most important. Do you think you already know everything you need to know?

Education Will Be My Downfall

My PO said I am manipulative. When asked why, she simply replied, "Because you are able to articulate your words, because when you speak you only say what needs to be heard."

She said that I am easily able to misguide young minds, like the government does—missiles in Iraq. I am only sixteen years young, how can I possibly do that?

When she speaks to others about me, she speaks so highly of my intellectual ability. She thinks it is up to her to keep me in facilities.

And knowing all of this, it comes as no surprise that "Education will be my demise."

-Giovanni, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Do you think you're manipulative, even if you don't have the same kind of power to manipulate as the government? Actually, making others want to do things that you want them to do is a skill in the business world. So, how can you apply both your intelligence and your powers of persuasion to bettering your life? Have you thought about going to college to become a lawyer?

The Block

Man, nowadays everybody gotta be from some block. It does not matter if it's a block or a color. Even though people get killed over a block or color, people still chose to represent where they from or what they bang. The killing rates nowadays are higher than it's ever been. Some people might think it's sad, but I just feel that it's just they way of life. If God didn't want them to go, then he wouldn't take them away.

By the year 2008, the murder count in the Bay is going to be unbearable. Man, I just hope I'm not gonna be another ninja dead in these streets. But if God wants me to go, then He'll take me. It's nothing I can do about it. But I don't wanna bring that pain and sadness to my family. Well, words are getting short, Beat, so I'm out.

-Quez, San Francisco

From The Beat: Do you really believe there's nothing you can do that could give you a longer — or a shorter — life? If it's all God's will, then why are so many young people doing things that are against His will, like stealing and hurting other people? Isn't it possible that God gives you opportunities, and that your future depends on whether you take them or not?

Mistakes

Here we are facing the consequences for stuff we did
Should have believed our moms when we was just lil' kids
The lessons we face are nothing but obstacles
We should have handled our situations with or brains instead of our muscles
But we're only human so what can I say
I'm sorry, so let me do a oner for a simple mistake
I'll learn from it, trust me: it'll do
Damn, wouldn't it make you happy if it only was true
But until then I'll give it my best
Instead of saying I should
Simple mistakes are easily repeatable
For someone not to repeat it would be labeled admirable
So it's up to us to decide
The miracle or that simple white lie

-Chimy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Yes, getting into the habit of making "simple mistakes" is a trap for repeating them. And the problem with the "white lie" is that it has consequences that are a lot darker… So, we hope you're up to stopping those "simple mistakes" that cause you to lose your freedom…

Education In The Hall

I've learned a lot in the hall, things I probably wouldn't have learned on the outs. Not because the halls' schools are better, it's just that on the outs I kinda took school as a joke. But in here you have to go to school every day, and if you get kicked out of a class, you may receive room time or may even get da whole day in your room.

Since I've been in juvy, I started to like school in a way, but I still hate getting up so early in the morning. Not that I'm lazy, I just think we should start a little later and stay in school a little longer.

-Swiss, San Francisco

From The Beat: What we particularly like about this piece is that you've suggested something very simple to make things better (start later and stay later) to show that you don't need to be a rocket scientist to come up with some excellent ideas. We hope somebody who reads this has some power to make the change you suggest.

Money Buys Momentary Happiness

True, money could buy you a lot of things like y'all said — cars, houses, jewelry, clothes and much more. I think money could give you happiness for the moment, but not for long.

Example: I buy a mansion in my home country (Nicaragua) right, buy me plenty of cars, clothes, jewelry and whatnot, and plus American money down in Nicaragua is more. One American dollar is twelve cordovas or something like that.

But yeah, my point is that money could buy you a lot of things that could bring you happiness, but eventually your happiness is going to be gone. If I was to be wealthy, I would buy my whole fam a big-ass house, and that would bring me happiness, 'cause I know I did something good for my fams.

I remember when I was happy without money. I was young running around playing in the park with my folks. And when I went to Nicaragua I would enjoy myself and be happy by just being right next to my family that I ain't never met or talked to. I don't need money to make me happy na-mean? Tone Kiki out!!

-Tone Kiki, San Francisco

From The Beat: Didn't it feel great to be surrounded by family you didn't even know you had? That's when you truly understand the importance of a loving family over the importance of money.

Tragedy Page

Guns, guns take people's lives
Young people who is only in their primes
Many of my family and friend died by bullet
Through the head or chest, anyway, they took it
Hurt their families and also cut my hearts in my families
To go against this painful tragedy
'Cause on November 4, 2006, my big brother was killed
Now how tragic do you think my family feels
Shot in the chest and didn't get a chance to see my baby boy
It's a lot of pain but just memories bring joy
18 years old almost 19 years old on July 08, 2007
Wherever he went soon I'll be on my way
My only older brother that I really loved to death
My family is the only thing I got left
The judge thinks everybody who make mistakes is animal
And belong in a little cage
I'm sorry but this is the end of my tragedy page
Rest in hell big brother Wezzy

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: We are sorry for the loss of your big bro. RIP Wezzy. Now tell us how his death has impacted your life and the decisions you make today? What are your thoughts on guns? What are your responsibilities to your family, to YOU! Think outside the box!

What's Wrong With My People?

What's good with The Beat? Maine, I'ma tell you what's wrong with my people (black people). We are doing exactly what the white man wants. They want to get rid of us. That's exactly what we doing by killing each other. They want us to work for free like slaves. That's what we doing in jail.

Andrew Jackson was a slave owner. My people worked for him. Now we are still working for him, the only difference is that he is on a piece of paper. Some of us will do just about anything for it. That's all I got to say.

-Maurice, San Francisco

From The Beat: When slavery was the law, there was no way out. But now, it seems that the slaves themselves are handing over their freedom. What will it take for people to say, "enough" and stop the war they are waging against themselves? (If your family still has any documentation or proof of working for Andrew Jackson, it's probably worth a lot of money.)

I Wanna Go Home

Never thought that I could be in jail
I can't believe I'm back again
What the Hell!
I'm supposed to have court today
But the DA tryna get me to say
I have this feelin' inside that I can't explain!
Purple an' khaki, doin' the same shhh every day
That shhh hella plain
I wanna go home
I wanna be able to do me
Like be free to roam
I know I did somethin' wrong
But, damn, I not a killa
I been here way too long…

-La Donna, San Francisco

From The Beat: You made choices that landed you back in the hands of strangers telling you what to do. You know what those choices were ("I did somethin' wrong") so you know what choices not to make again, unless you want to be writing even more sad poems like this wishing you were home…

My People

There may be things wrong with my people and I don't know it. I would not want to say that everything is all good and we as people are well and happy because we ain't. Most people think that we are happy enough and we have no problems. My people think we don't need help and are happy with how we live.

On the other hand, we have people that truly believe we have a problem with how we live. These people think we are killing our community with drugs, gang banging, and other things. I can't hardly speak for other people, but I can say there is something wrong with my people because they live how they live and are fine with how they grew up.

-KK, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We find it interesting that you are so reluctant to describe whether "your people" are in trouble or not. So, let's bring it down to one individual — you! Are there things that are "wrong" with you that you want to fix? What are you doing to change these things? Speaking just for yourself, what do you want to be doing in five years, and how do you plan to get there from here?

We Need More Attention And Help

My name is Badness, and I'm up at YGC. I'm writing about how a lot of real problems in the world don't get much attention, like how bad kids is turning out to be, and how many people are living on the streets, and how most of taxpayers' money goes into building new jails.

I mean, don't get me wrong, but, yeah, some of the money do go to schools, but I still feel that the youth need a little more attention. I mean, boy and girl clubs is cool, but let's be serious. A lot of kids ain't really gone just walk into a boy and girls' club and just join. I mean, living in San Francisco, it's a lot of youth jobs but, even though we have those, we still don't go for it. Just to say we need more attention and help.

-Badness, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate what you've written, and wish you'd given us some more specific examples of what you have in mind. Besides the Boys and Girls Clubs, what particular attention and programs would help you (and others) the most?

Who Is My People?

The title is "what's wrong with my people." But my question is, WHO is my people? I don't deny myself access to any culture or beliefs. I don't build walls just because of what I am or the color of my skin. I consider everybody as a part of me and a part of them.

-Capone, Alameda

From The Beat: Good point! You have made us seriously reconsider the way we phrased that question... because yes it's our common humanity that binds us, our common souls that we need to respect. Thank you for your wisdom. Now live those words.

My People

My people are ignorant and got too much pride, selfishness and are disrespectful. We used to be organized and educated. Now we're just stupid and ignorant. Some of us are screwing up and don't know why. It shouldn't be.

-Billy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: When you think about the ignorant way too many people act, do you have any conclusions about how it got this way? If "your people" were once organized and educated, how can we go back to those times? What are you doing to make sure you're not screwing up and staying ignorant?

Things My Parents Taught Me

When I was growing up, my parents always had live lessons or advice. They always told us, be careful who you hang out with, pick your friends carefully. Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are. And I never took that into consideration, when I thought I was making friends, they told me for a good person anybody will talk for, but for a bad person nobody will put they hands for them.

They always told me something and my answer was always "I know." But in reality, I didn't know anything and now that I'm in Juvenile Hall I think back and realize that they told me all these things because they were told the same things and they learned live experience. Now that they visit me we talk about it and I thank them and now I realize when they tell you something it's because they know.

-Eric, Alameda

From The Beat: What touching note of appreciation for your parents. Make sure you show it to them – and more importantly, make sure you remember what you wrote today, next time a so-called "friend" gets you in trouble.

Pushing Myself To Be Better

Life goes fast. I'm about to turn 18. Life is going fast. People are moving on. Do my homies stop and think about me? Do they think, does it cross their mind to write me. No! I cant sleep at night. All I dream is having another chance, being in the outs.

Man, tears in my eyes missing my brother. I haven't seen him for a minute. It's going to be long. I have to go through this year without him. He hasn't seen me grow. He hasn't been there for my birthday. Man, life is hard and I'm pushing myself to be better is hard.

-Lucero, San Francisco

From The Beat: Missing family and other loved ones is one of the hardest things there is about being locked up. Don't wait to better yourself. Like you said, life is too short to keep making the same mistakes over and over. You're little brother needs you. When you are free again, don't do anything you wouldn't want him to do.

What I Deserve Because I've Earned It

To be able to do good in math and have all my credits. I got all my credits and I think I earned them. I'm here for some of the dumb choices I made. I earned my credits because I came to school and sat down and did my homework and turned it in. I go to school because I want to earn my diploma and that's what I'm gone do.

-D-Mitch, San Francisco

From The Beat: There's really two things you earned in this piece: You definitely earned your credits by going to school and doing your work. But you also "earned" the consequences you're experiencing now by making those "dumb choices." Make smarter choices and you will deserve better results, and you will earn them.

Coming To YGC

Coming to YGC is not fun for me because I miss my friends and family. It is not cool because I will not know when my family and my friends will die and I do not know that because I am in YGC. I will not come back because I miss my family and I like to be with my family and go to school.

Coming back to YGC is not good for people like me. I am going to go back home and do the good thing for my life and help my mom and dad. I love my mom and dad because they help me all the time.

-Harvey, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are lucky to have two parents who love and support you. They have sacrificed many things for you. Now it's time for you to give up a few things for them. If you follow your own promise in this piece, that would be the best present you could ever give your parents.

Not Really Ready To Go Home

What's up wit' The Beat? Me, I'm keeping my head to the sky, feet to the ground, trying to see what the judge going to do with me. I wish I could go home, even though I don't feel that I'm ready to go back to the house right now, because I feel that I still need to mature in some ways, like responsibility, etc.

I hope I can go home and be around my thugs on the block without smoking weed, picking the pistols back up, even though that shhh was shooting at ninjas, robbing ninjas. But there comes a time where you want to stop doing dumb-ass stuff. Fa real, that shhh wasn't fun when I got stabbed in my back and arm. That was one day before Halloween. Then, the next day on Halloween, I got shot at two times in one day.

-Swiss, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can see the struggle between the child that understandably wants to hold onto the life of "fun and games" and the young man that wants to act responsibly and stay free. The fact that you fear you aren't ready to handle those adult responsibilities is, itself, a sign of your maturity.

Next Season

Man, I can't wait 'till next season
And I'm truckin', on the field
'cause they gave me a reason.
I'm the running back who else gon' do it!?
Make a hole big enough I'm going right straight through it.
And I'm fitted on the field with the armor.
And I gotta wear the visor with the gloves going harder.
Killsquad who's gon' stop us?!
Yeah Newark can't beat us, and Hogan can't top us
I pick 'em up, I shake then drop 'em
Yeah, I ain't Willie Parker I'm the touchdown stalker
And I can't forget about the "D"
Strong safety going heads,
crack you right off yo feet. Shhh!
And you think you going deep to the ten.
See me dropping back yeah better think again.
'Cause I'm the all-around best in the league.
And we 'bout to be raw 'cause y'all aint stopping me!

-Jamal, Alameda

From The Beat: We love this piece, especially when you read it aloud to the group. We're sure it made many of the young men in the room wish they had a chance like you to get out there on the football field. We hope this is your last time in the hall and you do all you can to enjoy the football and high school experience!

Why

Why is life filled with darkness?
Maybe because people are heartless

Why do people go to jail?
Maybe because they are tired and they think they fail

Why does everybody have to be a statistic?
Because they family gone and everybody missin'

Why do people hate?
Because they don't got it and can't live their way

Why do people have kind hearts?
Because they don't like to see people in the dark

Why did they have to make guns?
Because I guess ghetto people think it's fun

Why every couple of years they make a new jail?
More people are born so they think we will fail

Why do we have to shed blood and tears?
I don't know but that shhh is weird.

-Lil' Mainy The Prince, Alameda

From The Beat: Once again young man you deliver tough poetry, hard questions, that make us truly reflect. We sense from the workshops that you are ready to see life in a new light. We wish you the best in overcoming your obstacles. We hope the writing doesn't stop. Stay in touch!

Angry

I'm tired of being here around people that act tough
Can't never express your mind
People always act like you're talking about them and expressing theirs,
but you talking about you
People always hating on somebody
I don't talk to nobody in here
I mind mines, but people give me attitude
I'm going through mind, it's messing my head up
I just can't express what I need to let out
I feel like I'm going to blow up
Ready to let them know who runs this shhh
I'm quiet but I ain't the person to mess with
Death runs through my mind
Negative things going through my mind of what I'm going to do if somebody touches me
I don't give them what they want
I killed them with kindness
I mind mines but I'm ready to go crazy
Can't go to sleep
Go to school tired, having dreams my brother and moms dying
I'm filled with anger
I can't be in this body
I can't trust myself
I'm in a box
I'm trying to get out but I can't
It's happening for a reason
The devil is going to get in me
I'm tryng to be in a different mind, but I can't

-Lucero, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sound like you're in a bad way... and trying to get into a different mind is crucial. Experience tells us that when you're looking for bad things to happen, then you'll find them. But if you try" to let them know who runs this shhh," you're likely to discover that you don't! You are a pseudo-slave of a system that can't really care about you as much as you must care about yourself, but a system with power to hold you down if you allow them to. So, don't do anything that gives them even more power than they already have. Forget what others are saying, and focus on yourself. When you're mind is right, other things will naturally fall into place, and you'll be amazed at how many others look at the world the same way you do.

Life

People talk about you
And smile in yo' face
Talking about
She's this!
She's that!
Say what you wanna say
I'ma always be me
People always have something to say
But only God can judge me so
I don't care
What makes me mad
Is these people don't even know me
As long as I'm happy with myself
Then it shouldn't matter what
People think or say
It's all on how some people
Carry they self...

-Lil' Bipp, San Francisco

From The Beat: You wrote that as long as you're happy with yourself, it really doesn't matter how others judge you. So, we have to ask, are you happy with yourself? Are there things you want to change? What?

What's Wrong With My People?

What it do Beat? Me, nothin', keepin' it lit for da block ya heard! But what's wrong wit' ma people? Man, we killing each other left and right. Like we killing each other over money dat's gon be spent anyway. Also we killing each other over streets we don't even own, but we claim we dedicated to. Another thing is dat girls got ninjas going crazy ready to shoot people over them. But I gotta go. I'ma holla at y'all later.

-Gully Bub, San Francisco

From The Beat: You asked if we heard that you're "keepin' it lit for da block." Yeah, we heard, but did you hear yourself? Look at all the things you write about, asking "What's wrong with my people," and see if there's a connection between "what's wrong" and keep it lit...

What's Up Beat

Well I'm still here in juvenile hall but hopefully I will be getting a release soon. I've been locked up now for about three months now and a couple of things that I have learned are; first, you must not ever give up hope. Because in here, that's pretty much all you have. But don't get me wrong, I know first-hand that sometimes it is hard to keep your head up and always have a positive outlook on things.

For example, when I first got here I got my E-M release, but two days before my release, my dad got evicted from his apartment. That was a hard time for me because my mother is a drug addict, and she can care less about what happens to me.

It hurts a lot, but all I can do is keep faith and keep praying to God that I get a chance to do well with my life and make my loved ones proud.

Until next time, much love and respect to all the fallen and incarcerated homies out there.

-Lil' D, Alameda

From The Beat: Yes hard times is what you are facing. Does your dad have a new place to stay? Is it big enough for you too? Does he want you? Are you ready to contribute to making life easier for the both of you? As for mom, we're sorry she is sick, and we hope over time she sees that you are way more important than the drugs.

My Goon's Obituary: To My Ninja Bear

We All Miss You (Chorus 2x)
The goon be dyin' left and right
Ninjas gotta watch they back
Trying to not catch that flat line
Verse 1
'Cause we living the life of a dope boy
Ninjas getting hit, died over a cause
Moms cry wishing it was all good,
Wish she never had to bury her boy,
Wish she could see him again
Kiss him and say "I love you"
Now the only way to say it is over a casket,
Now she praying to god saying
"Why they have to take him
He's all I had"
(Chorus x2)
The goon be dyin' left and right,
Ninjas got to watch their back
Trying to not catch that flat line
RIP Bear

-Young Majic, San Francisco

From The Beat: Tragically, you capture the heart of the street wars that are claiming so many victims — the broken-hearted mothers left behind to weep alone, never to have the comfort of their sons again.

My Obituary

Man, my obituary will read young gutta-ass Poon-G was straight thug but he still had a lil' good in his heart. Even though he was a stick up kid, D-Boy Kata Kid, he tried to keep his young homies out of the game and help people go a different rout. Because things may look good on the outside ain't all good, feel me?

Out here it ain't sweet getting' shot at, robbed and all kind of shhh. But all the money and cars an' females an' shhh, you think you want it. Think of what can happen. The females will set you up an' yo' ninjas will turn on you. When you thought you was on top of everything, yo' world come down to a bloody halt, and you stuck in a box and ninjas celebratin' yo' death.

-Poon-G, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a very sad description of how it ends for too many. Why is this knowledge only important for the "young homies" to learn. Why isn't it advice for you to follow, too?

The Pain I Feel Inside

Another day and night gone
So much pain and stress I don't know if I can go on
Wishing I can wake up from this dream
Another person dead, I can hear their family scream
When is all this going to stop?
If I really try I can reach the top
When something good happens
It seems like something bad happens
Now I'm in jail facing several counts for assault with a deadly weapon
The worst feeling is doing time for something I didn't do
But why is this happening?
Is it something in the past I did?
It's like a pain that will never go away
Sometimes I just feel like running away
But will that make a change
Or will my life continue to be the same?
I pray to God everyday
Hoping He will lead me to a better way
I'm starting to think I'm going crazy
I've been getting this weird feeling lately
This pain inside of me is ruining my life
I'm trying so hard to do right
But how can I when this system is so unfair?
I didn't do this crime, but does anyone care?
I'm starting to think there's no hope
But I still believe in God, that's my only hope

-Baby Q, Alameda

From The Beat: You cannot rest everything on God, you too need to do your part to prepare yourself for the future. Praying is not going to get you an education. Praying is not going to get you a job. The stress and concern you have is understandable. The crime is done, you are incarcerated, and now you must believe justice will be served! Educate yourself, ask questions!

My Dad And Living In The Block And Coming To Y.G.C.

I would like to be my dad because he have good things in his life. My dad do things to help me and my family. My dad will help me with everything. My dad have a business and he got money the good way not the way we do to get our money. I would like to be like my dad because he make money the good way and have a good way and he have a good tow business.

If I didn't know my dad I would be so stupid because I will be making money the stupid way but if I get out I will make my money the good way. I am in Y.G.C and I will like to get out and help my dad with his business and get money the good way and I get into the bad thing with other people in my block and I will like to move away from my block people. It is not safe for me and my family because people in my block. My dad is saving money to move away from my block I will like to get out and help my dad get some money so I can get out of the block and not come back to Y.G.C if I am in Y.G.C I will like get a visits and a phone calls because I can talk to my family fast. When I am in Y.G.C I miss my dad and mom because they are the ones that help me with everything.

-Harvey, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like your father is a great role model and owning a tow business is a great way to make money. What have you learned about the tow business from your father? We hope we are on your good side so when it's time for a tow we'll have a hook-up. What's the name of your dad's tow company? You seem to have a great plan to get yourself out of the streets and furthermore out of the risk of getting shot or coming back to jail. How will you stick to your plan once you get out?

Roots Of All Evil

I'm not gone lie, I use to have the concept in life that money is the only thing that can make me happy.

Then I started getting older and wiser about the whole concept of having money in my pockets. I started getting greedy, started catching cases and the "whole nine" over a dollar bill. That's when I woke up and realized money is the roots of all evil. And you could get into a little bit of everything behind the roots of the money. And what's so cold is whoever has access to money has access to power.

-Keith, Alameda

From The Beat: Many a great thinker, from Jesus, to Karl Marx, to Malcolm X, to Gandhi, has come to the same conclusion that you have. You are in good company! It is so hard, isn't it, when sometimes our whole society seems run by greed and the desire for more, more, more. How will your philosophy affect your choices of career, home, friends, etc.? We would love to hear more from you on this topic.

Three Questions That Could Change Your Life

The Beat say I can't use bad language so I'm gonna keep it solid in this one. I know some cats think this street shhh is cool but truly it ain't.

A lot of cats might read that part and say "Oh, you a sucka," but ask them dudes three questions." Do you gotta watch yo' back every second of the day? Have you lost some loved ones in the past and recently? And make yo' last question be, are you proud of any of that?

So sad for me to say, but the answers to those first two questions is going to be yes. Nobody don't get no passes.

This shhh is really a young thug's life as long as he let it be. Just because you got guns and money don't make you who you are. Who you are makes that money. This don't mean get yo' grind on – it means get yo' shine on. These words come from ya' boy Lil' Kt.

RIP Lb and Lil' P

-Lil' Kt, Alameda

From The Beat: Now that you're out... we hope you're living up to these incredibly powerful and wise words. You got your second chance... and you definitely deserved one.

I Want To Be A Lawyer To Help Kids Like Me

Dippin' and dodgin'
Thunderstorms
Bloodstained boots
223's, 762's
Is this the life I choose?
I beg to differ
I want to be a lawyer
To help kids like me
Kids who want to do something
But they pulled into the streets
By the beef
I'm a lonely soja
With one person I trust to the fullest
That's my right hand man
Also known as my brother
We have different fathers
But the same mother
I pray that he stay safe

-Lil' A, San Francisco

From The Beat: Being a lawyer is an outstanding goal to have. What do you think it'll take for you to get out of the streets and become a lawyer? What will you need to do yourself? And what assistance will you need from others, if any?

Lost Seed

In my girl's house around
Early in the morning.
I'm in 8th grade,
summer just started and we both virgins.
That night I used no protection.
Right after I had this bad feeling like I did something wrong.
I started thinking about STD's, a baby, marriage, and do I really love her.
Then I cut.
9th grade starts and I break up with her; then I couldn't find me another female so I get back with her.
Then I notice other girls flirtin', so I break up with her again.
Then she told me, "You would of had a son."
The thing that got me was "you would of."
At that point in my life I didn't give a shhh no more.
I started to smoke and drink,
thinking I could have had a son,
a little Elisi running around.
Damn, if only that female wasn't so greedy.
RIP to what would have been my son.
I would have named him Male (My-le), the grandpa I never met.

-Elisi, Alameda

From The Beat: We don't know your life, only what we read, but are you serious, when yo uthink you as a middle school 8th grader could care for a baby? The greedy one sounds like you, friend. Is it fair to your kid, that his dad sits in a jail cell today? Is it fair that his dad still loves the gangsta life and not himself?

Thoughtless Thoughts

My days are becoming short and I still find myself getting stuck on what I want to do when I finally go home. I think about crime, about gettting a job, going to school, but there's always another option that pops in my head and knocks out the others. I think about helping my family, but I know the ways I can help them, they're not going to need.

So I ask myself, what can I do with myself? What can I become? I hate thinking about things I know will never come true, that's whey I think of these thoughts as thoughtless ones. Thoughts in my head can come from any category but they're always the same ones. I guess I would just have to think of one plan, plan A and make it possible for things to be better for me and not just have that thought become thoughtless because it will be important.

-Doug E. Fresh, Alameda

From The Beat: We have admired your work and worried about your future for years now – you must find a mentor to help you find a path for yourself when you get out. There's The Mentoring Center, Youth Alive, Omega Boys' Club, The Beat, Youth Speaks, a million organizations you could reach out to help make being positive easier to reach for. Do it.

Life

What's popping! Well, this is your girl in the hall, writing a little something about life. When I was young, I used to be hella bad but yet get good grades. I grew up thinking I was the shhh, trying to beat everyone up, be Miss Hardcore 'cause I'm Samoan and Tongan. When I tell people what I'm mixed with, some start hating or some just don't believe me, 'cause Samoans and Tongans don't get along.

Anyways, reality hit me when I was 15 years old. When I got my ass whooped. It was a fair fight and we were about the same size. I thought I was gonna win but my butt got whooped on. I couldn't believe it but it happened.

When I got home, I sat in my room being hella mad then I realized: that's life. Just 'cause you grew up with a lot of brothers don't mean you're gonna win every fight that happens. There's always someone out there that would be able to whoop on you, scrape you.

Sometimes you gotta walk away though, unless you're trying to be on lockdown. You gotta face the fact that people talk and if it ain't true, step back and let them talk. If you give up and think you're gonna do something, you better tell somebody. Don't think 'cause you told someone you lost that it's your bad, 'cause it ain't. The person that gets caught last, they're the one doing the time, while you out there feeling relieved and knowing that you ain't got hot breath in your ear. People just got to face the fact it's life that people talk.

Well, until my hands meets paper and pencil, I'll get at you later.

- Goofy, Santa Clara

From the Beat: There is a lot of heart and humility in this piece! Losing anything – a fight, a game, a competition – can teach you more than winning one. Also, feeling tough because of our ethnicity can be just a way to hide our true feelings. This piece really digs into some of those ideas.

Education In The Hall

Education in the hall is what you make it. Me, in general, I take education serious regardless of where I am because it is knowledge that you will one day need. It is here to better yourself and prepare you for life itself.

I also think that the Alameda County Juvenile Hall system thinks too low of the incarcerated children. I also think of it another way also because the kids just allow the teachers and the county to think so low of by demonstrating nothing other than plan stupidness and disrespect and foul words. I think that kids should take advantage of their education instead of misusing it.

-Michael, Alameda

From The Beat: We agree! Its inspiring to know that some young people like you are demanding more from themselves (and from the juvenile hall educational system) than just "acting dumb". Your self-respect should be rewarded with a challenging education. If you're not finding it in juvie, promise yourself that you will keep reading and learning about the world when you get back on the outs.

I Want...

I want the finer things in life
I want to be seen playing on Sunday and Monday nights
I want to be on top of the draft class #1 pick
I want to be known on the field for busing my ass, making the big hit.
But before I do that, I want to go to college.
I want to be one of the few brothas who have lots of knowledge
I want to win Heisman freshman and sophomore year
And let my junior and senior year determine my career.
I want to be on TV all over ESPN
And tell everyone how I talked about this with The Beat Within!
I want to travel all over the states.
And know that one day I will be known as an all time Great!

-Terrell, Alameda

From The Beat: OK, sounds like a plan. When you get on that TV show, make sure you call us so we can cheer you on and say "we knew him when"... peace!

What's The Struggle

Struggle
how you gone tell me what's struggle
I know struggle better than you might know yourself
struggle
that's a solid word
I done been through it
Hustlin', thuggin', bustin' my butt for nothing
so how I'm buggin'
I done felt that pain
literally felt the burnin' sensation of rain
been through change
some how I've forgotten it
tryin' to get rich real quick
tryin' my best not to be fake
save up money or win the lotto and get rich like Bill Gates
struggle
I been through it
put mind over muscle
I've been a thief
money gone, life gone, anguished out like grief
I've hurt, went to church, it light weight works
only if you believe and proceed to believe
I've put forth effort, although it's difficult
I hurt and did my dirt just to get my cash flow
I've moved with the movement
from state to state, city to city
have people wanting to be me
but that's a mistake, they're gonna end up like a caged up Geni
my lil' brother's growing up hearing what I hear
they're going to be Genies
wearing blue jeans, nikes and beanie
I can't let that happen like that though
I say forget struggle
my lil' brothers gon' use their minds over they muscle
fo'show. They gone get be like Boe
but shhh they cash flow gon' be legit
that goes back to the question how you gone tell me what's struggle
you know what I say about struggle
forget crime, put five fingers up and read between the lines.

-Boe, Alameda

From The Beat: You and every young person in the system is the teacher from your own experiences, so you'll never hear from us telling you or anyone what "struggle" is. Keep sharing your powerful flows. You have a gift. Teach through your writing what you have seen and what you hope and dream to be apart in the future!

What Makes Me Happy

With the topics that The Beat brought to us this week, I started thinkin' about what really makes me happy. Sometimes I just can't understand how people can say all they need to make them happy is money. I think it's very possible to feel good with family and friends that care about me, that understand me, that supports me — that never leaves my side no matter what goes down

-Baby C, San Francisco

From The Beat: Some people don't know what's important, even when it's right in front of them. You're not only lucky to have people in your life that love and support you, they are lucky to have someone in their lives who appreciates it.

I Feel Like Life Is What You Make Of It

The reason why I say life is what you make of it is because you are your own person. Means you should make your own choices. Me, I like to do everything by myself and on my own so that if anything goes wrong I can blame myself.

Me, myself, haven't been through a lot to make life seem bad. My life is good to be real but I just made the wrong choice. But that don't mean my life is all-bad. Some people have it really bad and it took for me to go to jail to understand. I'm very fortunate for one, to have my mom and dad here to support me at all good and bad times and for two, I'm still livin'. It's people my age that's livin' a bad life because they don't have anybody to show them love but I have that and much more I can have out of life so I'm going to make my life the best life ever because I am the one who makes my life what it is. I just wish everybody makes their own choices and make the best out of their life because at the end it is your life.

-Ebony Alameda

From The Beat: It sounds like you're very wise at your young age. It's not everyday we come across people who are as grateful as you are — especially in your situation. You are rare in that you admit to not having a hard life, do you think you're better off than most people in there? If so, how will you use your support system to your "positive" advantage? How will you mold your high potential into a great future for you and the ones who've been there through thick and thin?

My Hero, My Dad

Dear Beat: This is a piece for my dad.

I remember when I was a little and was Daddy's little girl. Now, I call for you, dad, and you're not even around. There's not even a sound and I'm feeling down. I frown. I feel like there's a hound. Now, I feel like I'm being chased.

Once again, I cry out for my dad – but there is no sound. There's the saying that says: 'Let's face the music,' but I'm wishing there was a saying 'let's face my dad.' I'm feeling so bad, if you could just forgive me for what I did to you. If I could forgive you for what you did to me. But I know that I can forgive you.

Dad, you are my hero because you gave up drinking and smoking cigarettes. You don't know how proud I am of you, nor will you ever know. I wish we can just talk and take a walk. But like the jam goes: No more Daddy's little girl.

- Angie, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Forgiveness between parents and children is the first step to having a good relationship. It sounds like you are ready to heal your relationship with your father, whether it is with him or not. The main thing is to forgive him and love him in your heart – even if you have changed.

My Dad

My father is lost in heavenly clouds
I know he watches me
do wrong from the Oakland grounds
The wind blows and I hear his voice
I think about him before I make my choice.
Father I need help I'm tired of doin' wrong.
It's hard for me to do right with you gone.
I still fell your presence but I need your strength
I want to feel right but I feel like I can't.
Without you father in a word of giants I feel like an ant with you gone left me internal scars, and emotionally mad but its nothing I can do but say I love you dad.
RIP Tesimoni Nisa

-Kaho, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for allowing us to read this heartfelt testimonial tribute aloud to the class. We truly hope your dad is the inspiration for you to lead a life free of drama and incarceration.

Education In The Hall

I feel education in the hall is hella worthless, because we learning the same shhh, ya feel me? They ain't showin' us, they givin' me the answer, instead of just telling me what the answer is. And, anyway, we only get three credits every fifteen days. Half the shhh I learn is the same damn stuff I learned when I was in the public school. I feel I should be learning 11th grade stuff, not middle school stuff, because I'm past that level.

-Breezy-B, San Francisco

From The Beat: Okay, so you're not learning all that you should be. But we're interested in what you ARE learning. You say half of what you're taught is stuff you already learned. Tell us about the other half, the part that is new.

Dad

I never understood why I did the things I did.
Growing up I was a well loved kid.
I never thought I would know the feeling of not knowing what to do
feeling lost and alone when the judge threw the book at me
I've come to realize that mom will never change.
Her being on drugs seems so strange.
It all happened the day the cops took my dad in shackles and chains
dad did you know what I went through raising myself
if only you knew, I'm not saying it's your fault.
I'm not looking to blame. I just wanted a father to ease my pain.
I'm sorry I lead a life I only know.
I love you dad even if my true feelings don't show.

-Amber, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Do you now understand why things are the way they are in your life? What are you doing to take care of you and correct the problems that bring you here? And how are your parents these days? Regardless, the time is now to take care of you!

My Father

you weren't always there, you didn't claim me as you own,
you hurt me physically and mentally
you hurt my mom and the rest of the fam,
you were always in and out of jail
i shed so many tears 'cause of you and what you had done,
but.... you came back in my life tried to bring back lost time
you help me rebuild my childhood
you gave me a spiritual life and your there for me and my lil bra,
your helping my mom in everyway you can
and for that i forgive all the wrong things you have done
i love you
you finally open your eyes
saw what you have lost and how you regain all of our trust, respect and love
back, now i could call you dad.
happy father's day

-Noel, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Bravo! You are very fortunate to see your dad come back into your life and it's super that you have forgive him too. We hope the communication is open and the two of you can talk honestly with each other. All the best with you future!

My Father

Wassup beaterz itz the looney one out of San Jose droppin these lines. Hopefully when you read this you are healthy and in a good state of mind. Today I'm going to write about my old man well when I was 2 weeks old my dad was sent to prison on a four year bid for underage sex. My mother left him just before he caught the case and he served his time in full.

He was released from the pen in the morning and as a celebration decided to drink some brew and cop some smoke. While upping on his dope he spotted an undercover trying to catch up his homeboy. He smashed on and robbed the cop and was sent back to prison the night of his release. My father did 12 years more in the penitentiary. During which time I was experimenting with smoking dank, drinking brews and had just begun gangbanging. I met my father when I was 14 years old inside one of California's toughest state prisons. He did 2 years more, more or less and was released.

During the time of his incarceration he bettered himself and got back together. My pops was released about 3 weeks ago and he's working hard to stay out of the system. He has 3 years of parole left but I have full faith now that that he has his family and job. Many may not forgive their dads after being missing from their lives for nearly 17 years, but I'm a forgiving person and I love my dad and give him my up most respects for getting himself out of the hole he was in and making a good life for himself.

Well Beat I'm out for this week but love and my up most respects go out to those of you who serve your time with out complaining and not goin' the j cat route. My respects to all who continue to put it down oh yeah forget haters too. Peace

-Looney, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate your honesty in tackling this topic. We, above anyone else, understand that people make mistakes and sometimes those we love suffer because of those mistakes. But we also believe that it's not how you fall, but how you pick yourself back up again that matters. How does your father feel about you being locked up? And what have you learned from him that'll help you once you're released?

Spiritual Healings

Block
My block's probably the definition of the last three words of block — Lock
Because we're like a chain there's no other race to blame
We're all the same similar names similar brain
Because we're all brown on the same roller coaster up and down
Up and down there's smiles lies cries and frowns.
Loud banging sounds
But in the silence of the night you hear humming sound
From caring mother in their sleeping gowns
Hush little baby don't you cry.
Then 15 years later finds the blunt and gets high.
Moms at church praying he wont die
Block my blocks the core of my heart
You thought this was the ending but it's just the start.
But there time to express my feelings
But for my block all I wish is spiritual healings.

-Johnny Santa Clara

From The Beat: What happens in the kid's life that makes his mother go to church and pray that he won't die? Did your block play a part in you coming to jail? If so, how long will it be the core of your heart? Do you think you'll be representing that block forever? You end by saying you wish for spiritual healing. What can people on your block do to help see to it that your wish comes true?

Can Money Buy Happiness

Money is the root of all evil. People never have enough of it, and get more of it by any means possible. They see people in the streets on their flashy car, sittin' on 20's and want to be like them because they are probably happy of all their expensive luxuries. But deep down, filthy rich people are just as miserable as someone who is dirt, poor. Once they lose excitement of one luxury, they move into another only to find despair and unhappiness.

What brings me happiness is making my niece smile, spending time with my family and other loved ones. Reading the word of God brings my happiness to me and brings inner peace, which luxuries can't bring.

-Tyler, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thanks for these deep insights. It's terrible to be hungry or cold, but if you have your basic needs met, you're right – it's love, friendship and family that give us the most joy. That and the beauty of a sunset sky/that's a gift money just can't buy.

But deep down, filthy rich people are just as miserable as someone who is dirt, poor.

What's Wrong With My People

Let me tell you young people, that's the problem boys and girls. This lifetime is so messed up. selling drugs and guns and all other stuff that even shouldn't be going on.

I mean this lifetime is so messed up you can't even go to some other block without getting messed with. You ain't even got to be in the beef, but sometimes people just assume things. That happen all the time. That's life. If you do good, you will get good, but if you do bad you will get bad. What goes around come around.

-Man Man, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, things are very messed up when there are parts of the city that are off-limits to other residents of the same city! But if karma is at work, what are you doing now to start building up some of that good on the scales of justice?

Can Money Really Buy Happiness

Well my great grandma always said that money can't get you love, happiness or anything like that but it sure helps. Now I don't know about all that but she was definitely on the right track, at least in my opinion.

I read a story recently and it was about a girl that had gone to her brothers and told them that she wanted to marry a poor man that has loved her for years vs. the rich man who had also loved her for years. She said that she would rather have a man with no money than the money without a man. This is really great and shows that her values lay in the same place as mine. I just want the simple things in life, that's enough for me.

-Thomas Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's very wise of you to want the simple things in life because nowadays it seems like young people are all about extravagance. It sounds like your grandmother instilled some great lessons within you. If you could create you life however you wanted it, what would it be like? Would you have a big house in the city? Or would you be content with a small apartment? Basically, where do you want to be in life?

Mom's Visit

Getting a visit is more important to me because I get to see my loved ones.

For example: my mom, I get to see her face, her emotions, even the way she smells, but nothing is better than giving her a big hug and a kiss that's been held in for her while I been in jail.

I would take a visit from my mom any day because I can't get tired of looking at her beautiful face, and the way she looks at me with her bright brown eyes.

Getting a visit is the best, because you can see them, hear them, feel them, and still get mail and pictures from them, so a visit is more important to me, that is my highlight for that day.

-Ronnie

From The Beat: When you are free how much time do you spend with your mom? We bet not enough, especially if you are finding yourself in jail. Make your mom happy and get yourself together, even ask her for support if need be!

My Poem

When I was younger I had a fun life
Playing ball and doing everything right

But as I started getting older and life started
Changing, video games and drug dealers is the one we blaming

I also have a goal and a big dream is one
Day I wake up is to be on a NBA team

Now-a-days kids can't have fun no mo' 'cause
Dying or droppin' dead is so close

So as we walk on with our life we gotta
Learn how to pay the right price

As I sit and write this poem it seems if I
Hear a train, but it's just things I hear in my brain

As I write this poem I try my best but
Sitting in the hall I can barely rest

So this is where I'm going to stop
'Cause my hand hurt and oops the pencil just dropped.

-Lil' Favor

From The Beat: Nice. When we are young and innocent life is a lot easier, but getting into drug sales is a one way ticket to big problems, and not a route to get you to fulfill your dream of being in the NBA. So what are you doing to better your life and prepare for a healthy future?

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My Dad, My Grandpa

Well I have a dad but I don't look up to him like that, I looked up to my grandpa as a good dad, but now hes gone and it's like I don't have a dad. He's gone 'cause a gunshot that went to his head. I love you RIP.

Even if I have anger for you 'cause you took my grandma with you! You took her with seven gunshots to her back and I still love you.

-Jesus

From The Beat: Oh this is heartbreaking. No one deserves the type of pain you carry. We are sorry for your loses and we can only hope you have the support necessary to cope with such a scar.

Visit From Mom

The man that I am
I need my momma
the only person that tries her hardest
to shield me from all the drama
one of the few that I show the utmost respect
so if I had to choose visits, mail, or phone calls
all I need is a visit from my momma
I no longer worry about being surrounded by high walls
and I no longer get mad over a lost cause.

-Capone

From The Beat: And what is the lost cause? You? You should be disappointed in yourself for putting you in such a place and causing great sadness to your mom.

My Dad Is Not Perfect

My dad is great man, but he got his problems. My dad was in jail when I was born, but he rushed to see me all the way from Rita (County Jail) and he stayed out, but then he got locked up again. He eventually got back out and stayed with me, but my mom gave me up while he was in jail. When he got out I was two months old and was with people I didn't know, and three weeks later my grandmother got me and raised me.

My dad is now homeless and has to sleep where ever he can, and gets harassed by the cops every day and he just got out of Rita again.

He also just got to go to my brother's graduation and I am locked up in here and didn't get to see it, but I should be out in five months, so I still don't get to be with my pops on Fathers Day, but he will understand.

Later Beat. See you next week

-Big Hungry

From The Beat: We appreciate the honest writing on your pops. We hope good things comes his way, in regards to finding housing and possibly work. We also hope you do your part to stay out of juvenile!

My Block

My block shed blood, sweat and tears
Pain run through the street that be filled with fear,
I lost a lot of homies in a couple of years,
at night the block is haunted it's kind of weird
you see drugs, phonies, my set and knocks
Immigrants getting harassed by cops
My block known for making caskets drop
Plus its funk season the funk don't stop
You see the ice cream man selling blunts
We drink bottles of liquor and pistols tote
You can come thru the spot, come thru the block

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you are proud of the dysfunction of your block, why? Can you see leading a healthier life free of drama and hate? Do you want better?

Money

Money is something that in this world, whether you want it or not, you need it to survive. And the more of it you have, the easier it is to survive. You're always gone need money for something. But the problem with most people is the way they're going to get the money; or that without knowing it, they're too close-minded that they only see certain ways to get out of it.

Me, after seeing what getting money on the streets is like compared to long-lasting, positive-like money, I'm going to take the long hard and positive way and go to college, and forever be known as somebody who did something major. And I'm going to have money in my pocket. And lots of it.

-Matt

From The Beat: There are a lot of rewards to be gained from going the positive, career route to earning money. For one thing: safety. Also, the feeling that some corrupt O.G. isn't making life-or-death decisions for you out of his own greed. And there is the satisfaction you get from developing an area of expertise, or from a job well done.

Forget The World

Forget the world 'cause everything bad is happening in my life. It seems like nothing good is coming towards my way I get shot and then I come to jail not even a month after I got shot. It seems like God don't even care about me 'cause He keep sending me through pain and it don't seem like the pain is going away. Sometimes I feel like I am not even suppose to be on this earth but I'm glad I am. I'm happy that I made it to the age I am right now. I hope I could make to see past thirty-five. I want to live 'til I'm a old man.

-Gaeland

From The Beat: Is it all God's fault? We are sorry that you got shot, but the crime that landed you in juvie is your own responsibility. What's your plan for turning things around and living a long and happy life?

Money Can't Buy Happiness

Some people think that money can buy happiness, but it really doesn't. They might have a billion and spend it on cars, jewelry, and stuff, but if you grow up with no family, how would you make yourself happy? Money can't replace family. They might think they're happy with all their things they bought, but deep inside they're probably really hurt.

-Zimbaga

From The Beat: Lots of celebrities have admitted this tearfully in interviews. A lonely man with lots of money is still lonely.

Respect It

They say great minds are bad to waste
But when I try to do right they laugh in my face
I really don't care I still try to do good
But it seems that when I do I'm misunderstood
So you can catch me on the block back in the hood
Doin' what I do, 'cause I'm thinking it's good
I been through struggles, got in trouble
Tryin' to get out the rubble, tryin' to strive to succeed
Maintain my mind humble before I burst like a bubble
So I cop another bundle and my money I double
But no body cares, so I can care less
Get a couple more stacks so I feel like I'm blessed
But this all chump change I wont me a mill ticket
Me and my money be close like Pinocchio and the cricket
Money will flip you, have your mentality wicked
And you hear staff say I love you like a piece of chicken
Tryin' to make us feel better but we feel like shhh
'Cause we locked up for the summer, on some dumb ass shhh

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: So, who is "they" that laugh in your face? The "they" have so much power over you, you allow them to send you back to the block to do no good, yet you justify this lifestyle in your head as if it's all good? You say "nobody cares," who are you talking about? Is it family that doesn't care about you? So you find satisfaction pushing dope and making sales, until you are popped and sent to jail? Don't play the victim, the time is now to step up and take action in leading a better life! Strong enough?

My Last Time

Well I'm back, 'cause I ran from the rehab group home, but its ok, because I knew I was going to. I really didn't like it because you couldn't go home until six to nine months later, not even home passes, and you can only talk to your parents, you can't even talk to your brother or any other siblings until you get to a certain stage and you can't talk to your friends and not all of them is bad peoples.

I need to talk to my girl, I think she's pregnant too, so yeah, I'm 'bout to be coo' and try to get out on E-M, and I'm jus' gon' do good with my family and loved ones.

I'm still gon' do my thang, but I'm gon' push myself to do good, especially for my kid, if I have one, so yeah I'm ready to go home and start my life on a good path.

God bless all who got court, hope and pray y'all get out. I'm out.

-Maniac

From The Beat: You didn't know tis before yo ucommitted to the rehab? Well, next time ask questions about the place yo uaree going to, so you do not set your self up for failure. You now have plenty at stake, with a child on the way. Time to mature up and be responsible!

Shooting Each Other For Nothing

What's up Beat, this is your boy Turk. I been thinking, is it worth it to shoot a ninja for nothing? I can see if it was for some money or something, but we out here shooting each other over nothing.

Man I'm hella mad at myself for being so dumb out here, doing this dumb shhh. Man I just been thinking I wasted the best time of my life. When I can be out there doing something right to improve my life in there.

-Turk

From The Beat: If getting locked up as really gotten your mind right, then the best days of your life are still ahead – not wasted at all. (P.S. We couldn't help but be sort of surprised by another part of what you wrote. Are you trying to say that money is worth taking a life?)

Sixth Grade

It all started in the sixth grade at Calvin Simmons, when my best friend got me started on weed and cutting school. So I started buying weed from a friend that I knew sold weed that I knew for a long time because he coached me in basketball in elementary school.

Well anyway I eventually got addicted to weed and my buyers were my friends and started holding a gun when my friends/buyers wanted to put me to work.

My dad did not know what was goin' on but he knew something bad was going on. But when I would smoke I'd put in clear eyes so he wouldn't know.

Well for the last year I started smoking in my room.

-Ryan

From The Beat: It makes us furious to think that this so-called friend who had coached you then sold you a bunch of weed. And that these so-called friends tried to "put you to work." You were just a kid! A true friend would never put you in danger that way. When you get out – your first task is to get some real friends who respect you and push you to respect yourself, the kinds of friends you deserve.

Fight The Man Legally With Success

People, this not somebody just sayin' this. I used to be "wit' the shhh," bussin' guns, chillin' on the block, makin' money (not to mention enemies), smokin', just givin' a don't give an "ef" attitude. Here's some news for you: There's no future in it.

I'm tellin' you, get a plan, go to school, use your talents. Instead of running from the rollers run on the football field. Find your talent and use it. Make a future, beat the statistics. You got to focus on your goals, make an agenda to follow and you will succeed.

Think about how you're going to do it and do it. Fight the man legally with success.

-The Truly Innocent Man

From The Beat: We couldn't agree with what you're saying more – and now of course we want to know how you plan on carrying out this agenda. It's easy to tell people what to do, but even better to show them what to do. How are you going to show the rest of us that this is possible?

My Thoughts

Sometimes I feel a lil'jealous in my thoughts
imagining that someone else could please you more than me.
It's just my insecurity acting up a lit' bit,
I guess because I know I'm not the most beautiful,
the most enticing,
the most fun,
or the most imaginative person in the world,
but I do know this, no matter how much times go by
I can't imagine you'll never find another who will love you
with a beauty and a passion and a happiness like which I feel for you.

-The Fly Kid

From The Beat: Loyal, caring love is far more rare and valuable than physical beauty.

Hella Mad Part #12

I'm in here hella mad, still ain't nothing changed. It's the same stuff every day; I got a call today after school. I had called my girl and got some mail today.

I got two letters today, one from tha wifey and the other letter ain't too much of nothing but hopefully wish give me this call tonight for I can call my girl again cause we wasn't done talking, so I'm gonna go holla at y'all next week.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: You know, if you put half as much effort into school as you do into keeping contact with these girls, you'd be a college professor by now. We're not blaming you – love is important, and connections to the outside world are important too, but by now we think we're on Hella Mad Part #500000. We just want you as educated and prepared as possible for success in the outside world... are you taking care of that?

Sunny Days

I miss that sunny day mobbing through the hood doing what I do.
But we in here living that Alameda county life
where people look for that jailhouse wife
wearing the same clothes every day and every night.
I wish I was the whales, they try to get them out the river
harder then the public defender does getting us out of jail.
It's too easy for us to take away our sunny days
but it's easier for us to get them days
them sorry dayz and then I know I deserve them days
so what I'm going to say is it's a one way ticket too freedom
so don't be late because it's time to fly straight and get back to them sunny days
so papa keep you head up I'm going to L-A
so hurry up and come home so we can get back to them sunny days.

-Sunny D

From The Beat: That's an interesting point: would the financial resources that were spent on rescuing the whales from the channel be better spent on rescuing youth from street violence? Does it make you feel like people would rather help whales than kids in the hood? How could society's resources (if they were available) help you to get on the right track?

My Step Dad

I have no respect for my biological father,
I haven't heard him or seen him in my whole life,
screw him,
he doesn't want to meet or communicate with me.
My step father is my dad,
he's been there for me as long as I can remember.

-Kyree

From The Beat: Tell us more about the love your step dad has for you and why he is so important to you.

Missing My Girl

What's up Beat. I just been up in the hall, sitting back and thinking about what went down and how many people I let down. And plus I really miss my girlfriend, she has always been there for me, but I always seem to make her mad and do something wrong to hurt her feelings.

But when I get out I'm going to do right by her because she is the only one writing every day. But you know what they say—you never know what you got till it's gone. The way I will change is by not lying to her and cheatin' on her. And ignoring her and her calls.

-Fat Boy Major

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes lockdown to make the world make sense. Do you think you'll still remember this when you get out? How do you plan to keep the strength of this promise alive in your heart and memory?

What's On My Mind?

Time is on my side. I can't do time but I could cause I have to.

My light in my room is off for 23 hours and 55 minutes a day. The only time it be on is when I wake up to wash up. The reason why I keep my light on is because it's like a melody, and it makes me calm. If I keep it on I go crazy, like a hyphy animal. It already feels like I'm an animal, like I'm a dog wrapped in a cage. The only thing I have let is love and memories.

The reason why I don't plan my future and dreams because in a matter of time it will get dried up like raisins. But if it comes true it's gonna be sweet like heaven.

Heaven is a place to be – but I'd rather be on earth and on my own feet, to be me, me, me, me me.

-J-Money

From The Beat: You are in a harder situation because you are looking at a long sentence, but look at it this way: With the light on, you can read books that take you to far away places, you can study about things you've always wanted to learn, you can read stories about how other people coped with lockdown. We see that you want to be soothed from the stress, but the light is paid for by the system, right? Why not let them foot the electricity bill for your education?

What's Wrong With My People?

I think there are a lot of things wrong with all our people. It doesn't matter if they're white, Hispanic, Black, Fijian, Tongan, Jamaican, whatever. If all of them are violent, then there's something wrong.

Me, personally, I think I've been hanging out with the wrong crowd and making the wrong decisions. I love all my potnas and family, but I got to stop kicking it with them and start leading a life of righteousness instead of hanging out with gang members, causing havoc, and selling drugs and using them.

I bet if we all came together and acted right, this world would become better one step at a time. With time we all shall prevail. 'Til next time.

-Dominic

From The Beat: It breaks our hearts to read such beautiful and inspiring words, knowing what a violent and confusing world you youngsters face when you get out of the Hall. We sincerely hope that you will find a way to stay safe and let your mind and your curiosity about the world thrive. Let your family and friends know you love them, even if you are going to be making some changes in your life. If they love you, they will understand.

Hell Mad At Myself

I'm mad in here 'cause I just got out the hall April 24th and came back on May 18th that's my birthday. I keep saying to myself how did I come back on my birthday and myself says cause yo' dumb ass want to go to the block and posted knowin' it hella hot on the block, but don't wanna listen to yo' baby mama when she telling you to stay at the house 'cause she's coming after school to yo' house. But No! you wanna go to the block anyway and get arrested while you posed to be at the house waiting for yo' b-m. I should of listened but didn't, damn I'm hella mad.

-Weezy

From The Beat: We all make mistakes. The important thing is to learn from them. You will have another chance to do right by your child, your baby's mama, and yourself. Start planning now for these temptations and choices you will face on the outs.

The Most Calming Feeling You Can Get

I look forward to all three: mail, phone calls, and visits. Mostly I look forward to visits because I can see my mom. That's the greatest feeling in the world.

But since I've been here I got only one visit in the past month. My mom is pissed off at me for what I've done because I've told her countless times I wouldn't mess up anymore. Now I won't allow myself to mess up.

I wish my mom could come tomorrow. I haven't seen her in a week! I wish they would let me see my girl and my baby. I like getting mail because when somebody sends you a letter you know they care about you.

They took the time out just to write you and that soothes me. I like it when it smells like the person who sent it. I'm talkin' about my girl in particular. I like to read them over and over. When I get phone calls -- which rarely happens cause I need straight through – I usually only call my mom or my girlfriend. But it's the most calming feeling you can get, just to hear your loved one's voice.

-Lil' Mainey

From The Beat: With so much going for you, the love of your mom, your girl, your baby, and your own clear eyed self – which shows through in all your writing – what do you think it is that holds you back? What's that obstacle you continue to trip over, no matter how many times you promise your mom, and yourself, that it will be different? Maybe if you can name it, you can beat it.

Mandatory

Education in the hall is mandatory, but it seems like teaching isn't. I've been here for a month and I only got one teacher who we really get work in his class the rest we watch movies. Not saying that I have a problem with that though.

-Lil' Laird

From The Beat: Why not? We would have a problem with it. You have a right to an education! Don't settle for less, in the Hall or in the rest of your life.

Tired of Rotting

I been in here for too long and I'm tired of rotting. I made wrong choices in life that place me here, now I'm like, damn… I haven't had my back rubbed, haven't hugged my mom, and last but not least I haven't blasted nothing.

I'm fairly glad it's almost over, because unlike a lot of people I have actually learned my lesson. All the better, I have learned the value of a lost brain and the length of other human beings.

All I have is me and God. No one really cares or better yet is going to be there. Just my mom and my daddy. Soon enough I will be out of here. But I know what to look for.

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: You, God, your mother, your father – that's a lot of allies to bring with you in your fight for mental freedom… but in the meantime, you don't have to rot while you're in here waiting – ask your teacher for a reading list of the top five books he think you should read, and make it your business to finish them before you leave. Boom! You just improved your mind on the system's dime.

Money: It Can't Buy Love, But It Can Buy Happiness

I don't think money can buy you love, but it can buy you happiness, if you're an average dude that came up and ain't never had nothin' and always wanted cars, jewelry, clothes and other fancy things. It would make them happy for a little while, until they realize that it takes more than just money to make a person truly happy.

-Lil' Nell

From The Beat: This is a good insight – it's short term happy versus long term happy. Which do you prefer?

Education in the Hall

I can't really tell you about school in here because I haven't been in here for that long. So far, it is ok, but the teacher they don't really teach. I rather think I would too, to stay away from here.

Man, I would do anything to stay home. I would just stay in the house to stay away from the police. All the police want to do is get people and just find something to take them to the hall.

Man if I can go back in time I would never did anything to get in here. The food in here is like dog food. For the last five days, I find about five strands of hair in my food. So for the last two to three days, I have not eaten anything.

I have been in here for like a week now and it seem like a month. I wish I can go home and eat my mom's food. When I get out, I will never ever come back to this hall again. I am mad at myself for coming here again. The hall is not for me and this will be my last time in any hall.

-Kareem

From The Beat: We know it's not fun. It's punishment, and it sounds like it is extremely difficult for you right now. You have to find a way (more than just a wish or a hope) of making sure you don't come back to the hall. Can you brainstorm some strategies with your mom or another family member? We don't want you to come back, either!

Distance Lover

It's important to close your eyes and let your tears fall
A mother of my son so baby stand high and tall
Start to release your pain in stress that's on your chest
Recognized as my wife to the rest
Many of your friends are fake and I need you to see
Now focus on our family and cut your friends free
We're parents that's living through a lot of hate
And have a lot of problems against our plate
That's allowed and a strong relationship so understand
You're my homie, girl, soul mate, baby mama and best friend
I'll give my only life so you can be protected and safe
Ultimate all the bad thoughts so I can go to a better place
And as I rest you'll still be on my dead brain
My distance lover the woman I'll always claim.

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: Yes indeed as young parents you must make your children your number one priority, and cut the ties of those who will keep you down. Regardless what happens in your lives you two will always be connected through your children.

I Bet A Million

Bet a fo' sure thing that my baby momma is eating the same food I'm eating, bullshhh (cow manure). Bet she stressing and wishing she could feel that good summer breeze wishing, she would of just listened to me while I'm wishing I would of listened to her. I bet a million she thinking 'bout me like I'm thinking 'bout her.

She in here for something I asked her to stop doing, fightin'. She told me she would stop and now look.

I feel like it's my fault because she been saying she wanna do something to come here to see me but I told her they aint gon' let her! Now she gon' see what is' like to be a criminal and treated like one.

Maybe I will see her at church or something so I pray to God I see her on Sunday. Free Sweety!

-Dairy

From The Beat: Bad moves all the way around. What a mess. We hope you and your Sweety will grow up and be the responsible parents your child needs in his/her life! Show some love!

Hey Beat

Hey Beat, this be Raskal from Hayward. Shhh, I got a interview today for a group home from Vallejo, but they said they wouldn't take me if I don't get my tattoos on my face erased. I told them "no", so I don't know what's gonna happen. Dang, I think I messed up, but man I'm happy the way I am. But they are right because it's gonna be hard to get a job and to raise a family and stuff. But when the time comes, I think I'll do the right thing. Well, until paper meets pen.

-Raskal

From The Beat: We spoke with you briefly the day of your interview, and understand that you were very disappointed. Having gang-related tattoos is a big stigma in our society. However, having these tattoos doesn't mean you are a bad person, or that you haven't committed to changing your life. You are just going to have to take it step-by-step. If you decide that the tattoos on your face are holding you back from a new start, then you can get them removed. This takes courage.

Can You Hear Me

I'm Boe.
All my life anything I say I felt it must go.
I've changed though.
Sometimes I talk and think I'm not being heard.
It's almost as if I can't say one word.
Can you hear me. Have you heard.
I won't soar high in the sky like a bird.
Not just any bird but a hawk.
I wanna be heard if I was to talk.
I think of myself as a bulldozer. Or matter fact a Range Rover.
Can you hear me. I wish someone was near me to hear me, but it's like people fear me. Why do they fear me?
I'm nothing to be afraid of.
When all I wanna be is they bud. I'm a cool person.
I don't talk to be talking, I am rehearsing, but you don't hear me though,
but you fear me though, that's why I feel like anything I say it must go.
But I'm cool, I mean real cool. I ain't rude
I'm like the freshest shhh since Jordan shoes, can you hear, now are you hearing me?
I could get real sensitive wit' heavy artillery. But don't be afraid of me.
I'm not the bad guy. Don't judge me by my appearance.
My appearance is what you just see on the outside.
Only God can judge me. You see a lil' chronic ninja on the outside
but on the inside I'm a beast.
And if I let loose my rage I guarantee you gone be my feast.
I'm far from the east, far down south. Can you hear me now
when I spit fire from my mouth.

-Boe

From The Beat: Tell us how you have changed? We know you have skills as a lyricist, and you are being heard in our pages, and we hope you too will show by your actions that there is nothing to fear in you.

Can Money Buy Smiles

I think money can buy happiness for certain people. For others, like myself, all I need is love. Love is what makes me happy because money comes and goes, but if you find love, true love, that can last forever. That's something money can't buy.

-Tay Tay

From The Beat: Wise words! Money can't even come close to the good, strengthening, healing feelings that true love brings us.

Money Vs. Happiness

Yes I need money to be happy money is like my world.
Without money I wouldn't be happy.
I wouldn't want to do anything.
If I don't got no money then I will be on the move doing some to get back on my feet.
I'm a over time hustla I'm all about my money.
Money is over everything to me without money I hate to be hanging out.
I risk my life for money. I risk my freedom for money.

-The Fly Kid

From The Beat: Sounds like a cold and lonely existence to us. At least you recognize the risks, as this path usually leads to prison or an early grave. Don't believe us? Check out the BWO section in the back of this book.

Life Being Locked Up

This is my first time being locked up and I feel like I'm locked up in a cage, like an animal at the pound that nobody cares about anymore. The government says it's better being locked up then on the streets. When I locked up, I stressed out about who's looking out for my lil sister, mom and the rest of my family.

Also, when I'm locked up I lose some self-esteem but I get bigger on the outs. I learned my lesson so there won't be a next time, so I don't have to worry bout who's looking out for my family because I will be there for them!

-Kyle

From The Beat: We hope there won't be a next time, either. Your family needs you.

It Can! It Can!

Money could buy happiness because if I was really rich, I would be happy.

If I had a lot of money I can buy anything I want, like buy a really nice car or a big house, all kinds of jewelry, really nice clothes, shoes.

If I had a lot of money, and I got it the right way, it would make my parents real happy and proud. I would also buy my parents a nice house, too, so they could be happy.

If I was really rich, I would also give money to the poor, send money to my cousins, uncles, and aunts in Mexico, too, so they would be happy. So that's how money buys happiness.

-Juan

From The Beat: It sounds like you would be a generous and thoughtful man, if you had a lot of money! (We bet you are these things without money, too.) It is true that providing for our loved ones can bring happiness to our lives and theirs.

Plant Cells

I think education in the hall is pitiful. Well, at least for me it is. Since I've got here on April 25, I haven't learned anything new.

All the things they are trying to teach me is like a review from seventh grade, and some of them give false information. Like today in science class, one worksheet said that all cells have a cell wall. I raised my hand and told the teacher that that's not true. Only plant cells have cell walls.

-Jerell

From The Beat: We have to admit that we just learned something about cell walls that we didn't know, so thanks for the teaching. Where did you learn this, and are you planning on studying something related to science?

Death

Death is life
It's in the streets
Especially in Oakland so many
People are dying left to right
People suffering 'cause they just
Got a phone call saying their
Son just got murdered and may
Be linked to a drug or gang related crime
When will it stop?

-Vee

From The Beat: Do you have the answer? What steps need to be taken to help stop the violence? Starts with you youngster! Make better choices and see beyond the b-s that plagues too many.

Women

This woman I know has a good look of things
This woman I know has been there for me for years
This woman I know love me for who I am not for what I do
This woman lost her mother in her arms
This woman I know is strong in ways most woman will never consider being strong
Her life has been up and down
This woman is my mother: educated, strong, wise, positive
That's why I'm not going to give up in life keep trying harder each day after day.

-A young son

From The Beat: We hope that you will share your inspiring poem of gratitude with your lovely mom.

Juvenile Hall Edumacation

In here, all we do is watch movies pretty much. Do crossword puzzles and word searches. I'm not learning anything in here. I know more than they can teach me. I feel I need to get into a group home fast and get a real education at a regular school. I'm supposed to be in Algebra 2 and they don't have it. I'm in U.S. History and physical science. Really though I'm supposed to be in Chemistry. I just need to get out of here to do right with my life from now on.

-Dominic

From The Beat: It's true, they don't have much variety of courses or advanced courses in the Hall. You have a choice: if your education and the prospect of going to college are important to you, then there are some behaviors you are going to have to give up. At least this has been an opportunity to reflect and make life decisions.

Whales vs. People

There are two whales stuck in the bay. I think that people care more about the whales than each other. Some people took time off their schedule to watch them leave and go back to the ocean. Most of them people don't even care about the homeless. Do you think that people would take time off to take one of them to get a hot meal? Maybe not, I don't know, but they probably spent some of their money to feed the animals. If those hundreds of people would help a homeless person every day some of them would be happier knowing that someone care.

-DaShawn

From The Beat: Animals need help too, especially when they get trapped because of pollution or man-made construction, but too often the most vulnerable people in society are ignored, as you point out. Is there something you can do, even though you are young, to help the homeless or to help youngsters in your community have a voice? Let us know more of your ideas! You are raising important questions.

Yesterday and Tomorrow

Yesterday
I was at Camp Sweeney doing my program
going home every week
with the highest badge level
getting ready to go home for good
'cause in one month I was about to finish my program.

Today
I'm sitting back in the hall
light weight stressing off my case
'cause police got me from camp
talking bout I shot these people
they're gang related so there's nothing to do now.

Tomorrow
I will be waiting on my bus to the Y
'cause I take a punk ass deal that the D.A gave me
it was that or go to adult court
I'm not even trying tripping though
'cause I got to do the time no matter what
'cause I committed the crime.

-Vee

From The Beat: Tomorrow you are in CYA, and we wonder will you be on the positive tip striving to better yourself working towards your parole date, or will you be soft, following others fools and getting time adds? Time will tell, we hope you have the strength to succeed with respect for you and your mom.

Hooked

Do I think I'm hooked, oh yeah, 'cause I won't stop I don't care who tries to tell me to stop, I won't it's a part of my life, I don't see anything wrong with it I'm not a knock for it. I could stop it if I want to, but I'm not 'cause it put me in a zone without having any feelings for aynone.

-Lil' Walt

From The Beat: You deliver a very tragic honest piece, thank you. We are saddened by your choice, but it is yours, and hopefully one day you awake with a new mind set.

Take It Back or Not

Take back that or not, things happen for reasons, like if I would have never shot them people I probably be dead myself.

I do take back what happen that night, but not because I feel sorry for the people that got shot, 'cause if you trying to ride on someone you better be down enough to get shot and take it like a man and keep your mouth shut, and not snitch.

I take back that night because I told my mom one thing I would do for her is walk the stage for graduation and now I wouldn't be doing it at all, 'cause I got years to do, so that is one thing I would take back but I can't.

-Vee

From The Beat: You have hood sickness Vee, you do not even have the power to make good choices, let alone fulfill your promise to your mom! Such a shame. Plus, you have no regret for shooting people. That's sick! One day you better learn to appreciate your life and the life of others.

It's Real

I'm out of here I'm about to go
Pretty soon I'll be leaving to LA or Sacramento
Keep getting locked up, out and then in,
Been in here so many times that I personally know The Beat Within
It's not a good thing to get locked up
And sometimes it's not bad
Until you think about if your girl's cheating
On you, then you get mad
My girl is faithful to the fullest and that's a fact
I told three of my friends to holla
At her, and she said forget that
When I talked to her on the phone
She told me straight away
She said my stupid dumb friends tried to holla at her the other day
My girl is outstanding a gift from above
She's beautiful, faithful, kind hearted, and the only girl I love.

-Mays

From The Beat: Love is a beautiful thing, and if she hangs in there with you on this ride, you are fortunate. We suggest you start showing her good reasons to stick around and how you are going to be different when you get home.

What's Gonna Happen To Me

I wonder where am I gonna end up,
I'm fighting my case,
all I'm asking for is a little luck
the DA is trying to send me away for a long time f
or something I didn't commit,
so I ask myself why I ain't saying I'm perfect,
'cause I made a lot of mistakes, but I know deep down
insight I have what it takes,
I tell myself that everything is gonna be ok, but I'm not the judge
I don't say if I am going home, or have to stay.

-Baby 9

From The Beat: You lost your rights when you came to juvenile. Tell us how everything is going to be OK? Are you going to change? How? What will it take to not return? Look out for number one, and that's you!

Hall Ed

The school is cool and there ain't nothing really bad about it. The assignments are good, and easy to understand. Teachers are cool, too, and they don't really disrespect or in any forms to be a "Bad Teacher." It is helping me wanting me to go to school on the outs. It be making me think, "if I can do it here, I can do I out there".

-Ivan

From The Beat: Yes you can!

Visits

I usually try to make things rhyme but I'm just gon' write this time. Well, my name is…uh… uh… just call me whiteboy. And I'm up here in maximum security 'cause my so called folks snitched on me. And now I gotta see my mom and pops through a three-inch thick glass while sitting on a steel little seat. I could barely hear my mom and dad when we talk because they got three little holes to speak though, but your not the only family trying to, so it gets loud and hard to hear.

And with that thick ass glass you don't even get to hug or kiss your moms, that's hella janky! And to top it off it's only thirty minutes long and now only a five snack limit.

-Whiteboy

From The Beat: In poetry or prose, we can already tell your voice will be a welcome addition to The Beat. Thank you for this precise and stark description of those painful visits.

How I Found The Block

What's up Beat, it's Major F! First off my block is crazy. I first found the block when I used to go to my patna's house.

We was hella cool, so we started hanging with the older cats, plus when we walked outside, we would write on the block. We started hanging in front of the store, and then people started asking us did we sell that, so we hollered at the OG's and they put us on.

Then we started playin' with guns and we stopped paying attention to what anyone said, and started trying to eat on our own.

It's crazy how the block can change you.

-Major F

From The Beat: That last line was the most intriguing in your whole piece. How would you say that the block has changed you? For the better, for the worse? Tell us more!

Love And Hate On My Block

I see lots of love, but at the same time I see lots of hate.
I see lots of OG's
selling cream, weed, heroin, and sex on a daily basis.
I also see youngstas like me and even younger
following in the footsteps and soaking up game
from our OG's.
I also see lots of dope fiends dying
'cause they had no heroin in days begging for a hit.
I also hear automatic gun fire
damn near every day and every night and lots of police
sirens.

-Aaron

From The Beat: You recognize the problem in this powerful piece, so are you mature enough to walk away from following in the footsteps of these poor OG role models? Hope so.

My Short Ass Pops

What's up Beat! This Lil' Tonio and this is a good topic that's been on my mind, cause I'm grateful that I have a real father and not a good for nothing ass daddy. As a kid, till now I have had an excellent relationship with my pops, even though he wasn't the most innocent man in the world.

My dad is a father like no other and I favor him a lot. I look like him and I have a similar way with females. Inspire of all his wrong doings, my dad has never inspired me to do wrong. He told me the life he led was for punks because everyone in it got punked into it and I respected the saying, not only because I look up to pops, but because it was true. So yeah, I love my short ass daddy to death.

He's the realest ninja I know.

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: We sure hope you show this piece to your father, he'll be proud to see it. Your challenges lie up ahead, when you'll have to live by his teachings on the outs!

We're Not Stupid

A lot of the stuff they teach is in the Hall is for middle school kids and shhh. I think they need to have classes for people who know more instead of doing the same boring ass schoolwork. I mean in math we be learnin' about fractions and shhh and to keep it real if I was on the outs and was at a real high school I'm supposed to be in pre-calculus classes and shhh.

I guess since we go to jail they think we hella stupid, but a lot of us in here is educated, we just do stupid shhh to get us caught up sometimes. When I go to school I be feelin' disrespected sometimes 'cause they be actin' like I ain't suppose to know the answers or somethin'.

When we come in here, some people be havin' problems with the work, but some are bored, and that's one reason why we mess up in class on the outs, 'cause we do so quick and when we finish our work, we ain't got nothin' better to do then clown around and shhh.

-Malik

From The Beat: Good point Malik! Have you thought of asking your teachers for extra work (we know how that sounds, but high schools have a responsibility to help you prepare for college, and smart kids often don't find the real stimulation that need in school until they go off to college). Don't screw up – step up!

Education in Here...

....just ain't doin it. They got us doin' work I did five years ago up in middle school. Our teacher is acting like we dumb, givin' us the same multiplication chart day in and out.

The government says they want to help us, but they actions show different.

-Big John

From The Beat: Have you stepped up and asked your teacher for some more challenging work? They owe you an education, but you owe yourself the effort to get one.

How I feel Right Now

They say, "Why you keep running from placements?"
What is it you're chasin'"
I know I'm doing too much because I'm stuck on
probation
I'm stuck in the hall behind a couple of walls
I ain't going nowhere I guess I'm stalled
My pop told me a lie for a recommendation
We said it's gonna be good but I built frustrations
Because of my situation
I'm in the same rotation in and out of my room, it's
called incarceration
But these mind games play me, it seems like everyone
hates me.
The judge wanna rate me on a one to five scale
They say I get no better I guess I'm like the weather
No telling what I'll do I'm tired of this
But what can I do I can't do nothing
So it's kind of hard being locked up with a small ass yard

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: Great writing, again. But hey, you can't have it both ways, right? The judge says you're going to repeat, and you, in your own writing, say you're going to repeat. So can you blame the judge for guessing right about the fact that you're still committed to street life and trouble? Not trying to disrespect – just trying to understand.

Puzzled

Yeah Man, I'm 'bout in this thing chizzled, man I'm 'bout puzzled bruh. They 'bout to send me to camp but I ain't trippin' 'cause I ain't in a rush to get back out there, 'cause ninjas they just be gettin' stomped anyway.

I ain't tryna be another casualty, and I ain't really missin' shhh anyway 'cause when I do I'm gon' shine from head to toe. Rest in Peace Lil' Dave, Ant, and Ron B, and last but not least, Lil' Boonie.

-Young Bruh

From The Beat: It's pretty horrifying to think that it's come to this in life: Stay in jail, or go "free" and get stomped. It's hard out there, but when you start talking about "shinin'" we can't help but wonder: Are you making it harder on yourself? If you get caught up again, doesn't that make you a target?

Visits Phone Calls Letters?

It's a hard question because I like all three. But the most important to me is the visits. I get to see my mom, dad, brother and sister and it's better because it's longer than a ten minute collect phone call. And I can remember what happened and what was said at the visit. So mail and phone calls are better than the visit.

But the visit to home when I get to go home is gonna be the best.

-Hazel

From The Beat: And the very best is when you get home and you don't have to ever come back. What will you need to do to make that happen for you?

Staying Strong

I'm still in here
but I'm trying to stay strong,
because I got something home to go home to:
A good woman, and my two little brothers and my mom.
But anyways I'm still fighting my case, and it's looking good for your boy.

-Turk

From The Beat: Details, details! We want to hear more about what your case looks like, what your home is like, and what you think your future will be like if you get out soon! We can see you're a leader, so where will you lead? Peace!

Maybe A Daddy

What's up Beat, it's me, Dearey from Camp Sweeney. Yeah I'm just stressin' up here 'cause I think my girl is pregnant, she's been throwing up and eating lots of food for the past week. Well, I don't know what to do. Her mom might kick her out, but I'm still right here at camp. When I get out she's probably gonna live with me. But I just don't know what to do.

If she is, I'm still gonna be locked up and shhh... and I just hope that things go well between us and her family. When I get out, I'm gonna change and do good in my life, I'm a go to school, get a job and earn my money legally. I just want my baby Karla to know I love her and I'll do anything for her.

-Dearey

From The Beat: Are you ready for fatherhood? This is a huge change! What do you think will be different about your life once you are a father? What will you need to do differently, what will you want to continue with? And most of all, what do you think it will feel like the first time you hold a little baby in your arms, and realize that this is a magic part of your blood? Peace, and courage for the challenges coming up.

There's No Price Tag on Happiness

Money cannot buy happiness or love. Money can buy exactly what it's made for. Happiness is an emotion, a feeling. I know it can't buy happiness because of one key point: there's no price tag on happiness.

Money cannot make me happy, but I can become excited and overwhelmed from having it. If money was not something that buys materialistic things, but some feelings, I would be happy. I don't need money to be happy because being loved by my family keeps me happy. Money I can do without, it'll be hard to survive without it but that's what family is for.

-Doug E. Fresh

From The Beat: Well spoken! But now, if this is all true, why do so many of us get caught up in making dumb sacrifices for money? Why do we do it? Why do we allow ourselves to become impressed by wealth when there are so many things in the world that are much more important?

Better in Jail

This time I'm doing ain't nothing compared to my lifetime.

I can't take this time back but I got to make the best of it -- like eating three meals a day 'cause I just eat junk food when I was out or waking up at eight in the morning 'cause I always used to wake up at twelve 'cause I be too drunk the night before. I even play games in here, 'cause I be out kickin' it with my homies, doing it.

And whoever is reading this, be yourself, and quit being a sidekick and follower. Just be different. Peace.

-Elisi

From The Beat: Interesting. So are you saying you feel like there are things about lockdown that have actually been good for you? And if so, are you going to keep any of those habits when you get out, or do you think you'll go back to the old ways right away?

What I Deserve

I deserve to get a release because I been here for two months and I still ain't learned my lesson. Bein' in the Hall don't teach me shhh. To me it's just a waste of my time. The only thing I learn in the hall is new crime. I meet new people and hit new licks. That's because they don't' do a rehabilitation program for us.

All we do is go to school and free. The Hall don't teach me nothing' that's why it's a waste of my time they need to send me somewhere and stop wasting my time. Even in prison they have programs you could join so why don't they have that here?

-Dedo

From The Beat: Have you learned anything about what's important to you, what matters to you, who you care about, what you want to do in your life? Some of the most important life lessons we get don't come in school, but we have to be willing to learn them!

Can Money Buy Happiness

Honestly money can't buy shhh but the fancy shhh that you want and you can get that in the fast lane.

From what I see, money can't buy love, a family, friends or freedom.

If money can buy you out of 25 with an L and it comes true, God was on your side, and I'm out, ballin'!

-P Da Jr.

From The Beat: Hmmm, plenty of people with money who are absolutely not happy. As for money saving you from a life sentence, well, that's possible for a few.

In a Legit Manner

In wanna be remembered as a person that many people look up to in a positive manner. I wanna be that person that gets his money, clothes, and females in a legit manner. I would like to have a full-time job making $80-$100 an hour being an engineer in a legit manner. All these things sound good, but until I become that age to where I could do whatever I want... I still live under my mom's roof, so I have to abide by all her rules that apply to me in her household.

When I look at my future I see a beautiful future for myself that will soon come true.

-Shadow

From The Beat: Oh we're pulling for you, to step away from the shadows and be that leader that lives a healthy legit life. If you want it you can do it, and if you have the support even better. If you think you can be a gangster and live righteous, you have some bad news coming.

Spirits

Spirits are dead that I can't feel
It's so blind, it's time to keep it real
This is not me, I'm dead and alive
I'm tired of living these stupid lies
I can't believe my life is over now
But I'm not going to stop or throw in the towel
My spirits are gone out of my body
The devil is here, it's time to party
I'm running and running, running away
I only live now because tomorrow is not promised today

-Lil' Mainy The Prince

From The Beat: Where did your spirit go? What are the stupid lies? Who fed them to you? You are too young to think that life is over, life is just beginning, and you should use this time as a new beginning, a new you!

My Wish

I wish you wasn't dead when I go out.
It's gonna be hard seeing yo' name on the window of the bus I ride every now and then.
And people putting shhh on your name and seeing yo' face on hoody and on Myspace.
Me in your family miss you, but I'm still mobbin for you bra.
I said I wish you wasn't dead when I got out.
It wasn't long ago since we been with each other.

-Kenneth

From The Beat: You lose a close friend, yet you think it's in the best interest of him and your family to continue mobbin'? This is the time to think of another game plan, 'casue the game you playin' is a straight death wish, if not a long prison term.

Wonderful Day

What's up Beat, you know it's me again – Lil' Bc. I just been chillin', talkin' to my folks. When I had got my weekend pass I had my overnighters. All I really did was chill with my friends and family.

We had fun all day. I went to the park with my little niece and nephew. They said that they had a lot of fun and liked it. I went to go see my girlfriend and she was happy to see me again, and I was happy to see her. We just kicked it at my house.

On Sunday I had went to church with the family and we all enjoyed it.

-Lil' Bc

From The Beat: It is so nice to see an actual happy piece in The Beat. With all the stress our writers go through, every once in a while they also get the joy of connecting with family and loved ones. Thanks for spreading the joy!

The Legend Lives On

Well, mine would go something like this: Daniel, rock LEGEND died today at home from strumming his stunning Warlock guitar!! In his large suburban home, Daniel, was practicing with his band, Acid, before the show. He was playing guitar when he accidentally stepped on the Muff distortion pedal, and the very sound from his guitar reverberated and blew his house up and caused a serious power outage that lasted for weeks!!! We will never forget you, Daniel. Rest in pieces, Daniel!

-Daniel

From The Beat: Oh that would be horrible if that was the case. You create a pretty dark yet funny obit. At least you were doing what you love most, playing geetar with your band. Given this is not the case, make sure and send us your demos, we'd love to hear Acid!

What's Wrong With My People?

Ain't nothin' wrong with my people. We just go too dumb for these white folks. They can't do shhh wit' us so they lock us up, that's all.

But nowadays it's some of the white folks that wanna be like us, so they copy what we do and get locked up too! Pretty soon America is gon' be a big ghetto and Lil' Wayne gon' be the president.

And hell yeah money can buy happiness. What do you think. Money can buy everything. If money can buy cars, sex, rare diamonds and people's souls, so why can't money buy happiness?

-Dedo

From The Beat: The first part of this piece made us laugh out loud, especially when we tried to imagine Lil' Wayne as the president – but as for happiness, we gotta say, selling your soul for money is the saddest thing we ever heard. And the rest is just stuff.

Who's Happy Without Money?

In my opinion, money can buy happiness. My reason for this is that is because without money there is a limited amount of things you can do or have.

Without money you wouldn't be able to buy cars, good clothes, or other nice things. I don't think that there's anyone nowadays that's happy without money.

The reason of me thinking that is because in this era, money makes people who they are.

-Young Chip

From The Beat: We agree that you need a minimum of money – enough for food, shelter, health insurance, education, comforts, and finally, entertainment. But a lot of people think they need things like rims chains, expensive clothes – do you?

Yes and No

Can money buy happiness? No it can't, because once someone has a lot of money they ain't going to want to hang out with someone who don't have any, so basically they will hang out with someone on their level, so I think money can't buy happiness.

But it also can buy happiness, because you can pay someone to hang out with you. Well not basically hang out but when you do, do something you'll have a lot of fun because of the money. So basically I go for both – it's a yes and no about can money buy happiness.

-Big Head

From The Beat: It takes a smart and complex mind to see both sides of an issue like that! What about for you in your life? How much money would you need in order to be happy? And would it make a difference to you how you earned that money?

No Jobs

Ain't shhh wrong with my people except that we forced to post up on the block, tryin' to get it how we live by selling dope and don' other shhh we feel like we have to do to survive, on this planet we call earth. Because there really ain't no jobs out there for no young Black minorities like myself and why go to school or work at McDonald's when you could be makin' hundreds of dollars every day standing on the corner by the store?

-Tibb

From The Beat: Why? Why? How about, self-respect, honest money, staying out of jail and out of the violence, working for the future, and knowing your friends are there for you because they care, not because you're in business together? You have other options, you know. Don't play the poor victim! There's a world out there for you!

What's Wrong With My People?

My people are quick to pull a pistol
before using their hands or mouth.
My people are also so ready to get rich,
but dumb as hell!
I mean, if you want to get rich, wouldn't you have to have an education?
You can't be a dumb-ass rapper!
You have to know and learn vocabulary.
You can't be a dumb-ass clerk,
lawyer, banker, doctor or any money making individual without education!
In my eyes you can't even be a dumb drug dealer.
You'll get popped or robbed, and you damn sure ain't gonna get rich.
That's what's wrong with my people!

-Smack-Arnold

From The Beat: Whew. We feel you on this. Can't get far in life without an education. What's the game plan for you upon getting out?

A Little Bit Of Happiness

Money can buy anything except for some happiness.
Money buys material stuff, not happiness;
I got money and still ain't happy.
I live on my own on the streets with money but not happiness.
You gots to find something for real that makes you happy.
If it's money that makes y'all happy, go out and get it.
But that ain't what makes me happy.
When it comes to it, when you the only ninja out on the streets
at four-thirty-in-the -morning, sitting on a bench
looking at your mama's house with money in yo' pocket, is you happy?

-Pwarvey

From The Beat: Those last lines, hit hard. How did it get to the point where you got yourself kicked out of your mama's house? Can this be corrected? Sounds like you want to return home. What must you do? Any ideas? We have some, get in touch with us.

What's Wrong with My People?

Things that are wrong with the people is that they in the streets, peer pressure and joining gangs. I know people can change. If you show them how you can change, they would see another way through you. If there are people that make a bad name for people, I would tell them to be positive and make a life of themselves. Most people I know made it in life, and for me, I see them keep going in life even if I am in The Hall. I wouldn't be messing up once I get out The Hall that scared me, and scared me so I'll be scared to go back in there.

Right now I have a job and am still in school trying to make it in jail. Hopefully I get out fast and can still keep my job and can still be with my family and friends.

Life is hard, money can get you happiness, but can't last forever. Friends missing you, trying to lead, showing them what's up. All I can say is keep your head up!

-Lam

From The Beat: You sound very positive and it also sounds like you have the support to make it and never return to juvenile. It's a hard road, but such is life, no one said it was going to be easy. Use this experience as a stepping stone to bigger and better things. Get the job back or find another and get into school!

Money and Happiness

People are happy without money. Well, that's only when they have true love, and I think that's the only thing people really need. And I tell you from experience, so please people out there, be more for your kids than your bills. Because, I'm telling you love is the magic key for all your problems.

-Angel

From The Beat: Kids first should always be the motto, sadly, that's not the case with many, and money like it or not is a priority in order to survive , but you can do legitly too! First stop, school!

Money

I think money can buy happiness because money can get you what you want in life and live. If I had money, I wouldn't be in juvenile hall right now. I would be out there getting what I want and need, living life to the fullest.

Without money, where would I be, right here in the Hall like I am today, thinking when I'm going to get out.

Without money, how would people live, eat, and survive out there in the streets. That's why us young kids now are in the Hall because we all need money. That's why us kids are robbing people, breakin' into people's houses and other stuff they do to get what we need and want to survive on the streets.

Now if us kids had money, we wouldn't be in the Hall. We all would be at home or in school doing what we have to do to get on with our life and be somebody not someone that's just living. So yes, money can buy happiness.

-Vincent

From The Beat: You're saying coming from money would prevent you from doing the dirt that brings you into juvenile? That makes sense. Juvenile hall would probably be less filled if more people had jobs aka money. Good point.

Question

I know you ask yourself a lot of questions and you answer them, but it's one question that you ask yourself but can't answer. Yes, it's hard to answer but easy to ask. Just lie when you ask for something, that's easy. The answer might come hard and you're scared. You have to stick to whatever comes out just like that question sticks to you. When you answer it, it's not the right answer so you still ask yourself.

Tell me, what is the question you ask yourself? Is it the same question I ask myself? Here's two questions for you. A question asking for a question. Yes. That's not the answer that he or she wants. Nor you. What is the question that might help you? Where is the answer to the question that everybody asks you and the question you ask yourself?

-Grapes

From The Beat: You've got us wondering what in the world the question is. What question do you ask yourself that you don't have an answer for? Why, is always a good start. Like maybe we'd ask why are we here? What's our purpose in this lifetime? Do you have an answer for that question? Why do you think you were given life? What do you think is your purpose and how does that relate to where you are now?

Just OK

My education in the hall, you can say it's OK because e you don't study really big things But your education's depend on you, if you really want to expand and your mind or not.

-Walt

From The Beat: So true. So tell us, do you want to expand your mind? And have you?

Picture Frame

Power and strength, that's what it takes to move on from things that hurt you. I have the ability to do what's right. Making wrong decisions are not acceptable. I just can't forget about anything. I'm going to need help, I'm not supposed to let the devil see through me. I need to accept my apology and pimp this wrong I'm living. I don't want to abandon my soul for the person who wants to take my life.

My life is like a picture in a frame, you can see that hope that you want it to be and reach inside that picture. You be the person to set things in the place you want it to be. One little thing does wrong and you need help to put things back into place. You can't do it right away because it takes time to get it back together.

You might think a little time but for some people a year, maybe more. You can say the fun was easy but the consequences are hard to do. A lot of people say they can relate and yes some people can. Some people that can't relate to you judge you. They don't want you to judge them so don't say anything about me if you can relate nor the people that life is straight.

-Grapes

From The Beat: You comparing your experiences with a picture frame was brilliant and we could definitely see the similarities. And you're right that people can't judge you because everyone virtually does something wrong. However, we can't get caught up in the same cycle as them, so we should focus on what we have control over. What do you have control over? Who or what can you change? Do you feel like it's wise to focus on what we have control over or do you think we should also focus on others?

To My Creator

Thank you God you make me
That you God you made me see
Thank you God you woke me up
Thank you cause you took me out of my bed
Thank you God because I started the new day with a clear head
Thank you God cause I found you
Thank you for proving to me the love you have is true
Thank you God you made me
Thank you God you made me see

-Erica

From The Beat: What has God made you see? There are a lot of people that don't believe in a particular God, how do you feel about these people? Were you talking to God when you were out? If this is what works for you, we say great, we just don't want you to fall into the same trap as so many others and that's talking to a God when you're at a low point in your life and not talk to him when you're at a high point. Because if you're one of those people, what's the point?

I Love Visits!

I like when I get visits from my Mom, my granny, my lil' brother and sister, and my grandfather. I like to conversate with my family and hug and kiss my siblings. I also like when they get me food.

For example they get me sandwiches, candy and soda. I don't like when the officer tells me I gotta go back to the unit and my family has to leave. I love when they bring me magazines because they keep me busy when I can't go to sleep on a late night I can't wait till I get out of here so I don't have to worry about visits or nothing like that.

-Jamon

From The Beat: From what you explained here you made it clear to us why you enjoy visits so much. What does your family have to say about your current situation? Do they fill you in on what's going on, on the outs? It sounds like you have a whole lot of people coming to see you. Are you grateful for that?

Can Money Buy Happiness

Simple: No! I don't believe money can buy happiness. Money can buy clothes as you said, it can pay bills, supply our food habits. Money may make us feel as though we are happy, but that is not so. Money is just as materialistic as the things we spend it on, it comes, it goes as well.

Don't get me wrong, money makes us feel great when we have it but just like a drug it's addicting. Therefore, it makes us miserable. No. Money is not my happiness. God created me therein, it is he that I am happy.

-Erica

From The Beat: You bring a very different perspective to the table than most and we like it. A lot of people would say money can buy happiness, so what would you say to these people? What's more important than money? Do you think people's pursuit for money is foolish? What, besides God to you, can give you happiness?

My Phone Call Home And Mail

When I get a phone call I get happy because I get to hear my family's voice. And tell them I love them and hear them say it back but it's a down side too — it's only a 5 min call. And it's hard for me to hang up and sometimes I get in trouble. Mail I love to get mail because I can read it over and over again and look at my pic all night but the down side is all you can do is just that read and look at your pic but it's better than two phone calls sometimes.

-Moo Moo

From The Beat: You didn't speak of visits at all. Do you get visits? Why do you like phone calls and mail more than visits? We hear you tho', at least with mail you have something the whole time you're locked up. What are your favorite pictures right now? Do you get to hang them up on your wall? Do pictures motivate you to get out and do better? If not, what does?

I Got Reasons To Complain

I'm crazy insane, or I'm sane – in my brain I got reasons to complain.
I'm tired, alone. I which I had a happy place, some place – some place.
Some place, a place I could call home.
I'm happy, I'm angry. There's reasons I could envy.
Peace could be around me, god, yes I have not found thee.
I'm excited, I'm free. But yes you thought you know me.
Who am I – I don't know. Can't get past the hurt I've been put through.
My role model is me cause I ain't got nobody.
I'm hyphy, scrape fast bet I could be da baddest – I'm crazy, insane.
Now do you think you know me? Are you about to start complaining?
Tell me should I be ashamed of this?
She wanna be, she wanna be somebody new.
Can't quite get free, just let her be. Tell me why can't you.
Stop talking mess behind her back.
Why do females gotta be funny style like that?
Not saying that she give a damn, just stop it fast if you can.

-Erica

From The Beat: The girl you speak of seems like she's getting frustrated with the gossip that's going on around her. Do you believe that the girl gives power to those that gossip about her by giving attention to it? Do you feel like the girl ignoring whatever they're talking about would drive them insane rather than giving her that stress? Hopefully, the girl will be able to handle such people in a productive way because no matter where she goes there will be people hating on her. We guess it's just a part of life.

My Block Is Not Safe Anymore

You see so many things standing on your block. Because every block is different, you see different people and buildings. When I was young, I always played on my block with no worries. Now that I am older, I have to watch out more. What attracts me to the block is the people that hang on it. Now that they put cameras on the block, you have to watch what you do. No block is safe, because anything could happen.

-Maurice

From The Beat: Knowing that no block is safe and that anything could happen, does this make you want to stay off of it more? Why do you think younger kids don't have to worry while older kids do? At what age did you have to start worrying?

When I Am On Da Block

When I'm on da block, I see heaters, yola, clean ass scrapes, ninjas getting robbed, smoke 'dro every day all day. What make me go to da block? I was born there, grew up there, friends, family and money, and this was how I was raised. I got other options in the world, but I choose this to live, until it's time to stop the excitement, is what I live for on the block.

Is the block safe? Me, when I am out there, the block ain't always safe, but it can be, but being in here, I build up so much rage and I gotta hold it.

-Yg

From The Beat: Will you be taking part in all this "excitement" for the rest of your life? When do you feel like the block is most safe? Did your block play a part in you being in juvenile hall right now? Do you really feel like it's "your" block?

My Block

When I'm on my block, I see guns, drugs, females, da homies, cars, money and a lot more I can't talk about. I see families arguing with each other. I see fights. I see sideshows on the block. I see da narcs hoppin' out on us when they think something going on. The block is safe unless someone slide through. It's still safe for us, though. I see me and da homies smokin', drankin', and poppin' pills.

-Quese

From The Beat: From everything you see on your block do you think that it's beneficial to be there? A lot of things you've listed about your block are negative, what are some positive things you see on your block?

Mail, Phone Contact, Or Visits

It's real hard for me to decide. Being gone for almost two years and coming back makes it even worse. Before when I used to write my fam, no one really wrote me back, except for a cousin and that made it hard.

Phone calls are hard but good at the same time. Sometimes fam don't have a phone or they don't pick up. But when they pick up it's so/so and sometimes it's not a good phone call. On visits family sometimes come and sometimes they don't.

But feel me I know that I got my self locked up and what ever goes down I know that my fams still love me and if I was out things will be different so I take what I got for granted.

-Halo

From The Beat: Yeah, it's always way better to be out and not have to worry about mail, phone calls, or visits. Why do you think you take what you got for granted? What will help you appreciate the love you receive from your family? And how many people do you think have that same kind of love where you are?

Visits Are Most Important To Me

Visits are most important to me, because I get to see the people I love. In YGC, you're in a cell half a day, with another person you hardly know. So when I see my mom or dad, it makes my day a little better, knowing that the people who care for me come to see me. I know some kids in here whose parents never come to see them. That makes me appreciate it a little more to know I got parents who care for me.

-Joseph

From The Beat: It's nice of you to appreciate how lucky you are to have parents who come to see you. When your parents show you love by coming to see you, do you feel bad for making whatever mistake you made to get locked up? Do you think you can learn to appreciate them when you're out too?

Where I Belong

Some people say, Mike, you ain't from (our 'hood.)
You don't put work in, you ain't busted no shots.
You don't cash out ya' homies, you ain't never blew dro.
You be on the block naked, just postin' at the sto'.
Now I ain't a grimy ninja, so don't get me wrong.
Ninjas hate on my jets — it's where I belong.

-Mike

From The Beat: Great poem, Michael. Somehow, from what you've written, you've resisted the pressure your homies are trying to lay on you to put in work for your 'hood, etc. Where did you find your strength? Why do you feel like you only belong on your block? Can you belong somewhere else like in a classroom or at a job interview? Why just the block?

When I Think Of You

When I think of you a smile comes to my face.
When I think of what I'm doing to you by being in here,
It makes me feel even badder of what I'm doing to myself.
When I think of the things we have been threw
It makes me think of how much you care
When I think of what I did to get here I get mad and wanna cry
But yet I cant cause I think of how much more it would hurt inside. When I think of coming home to you
It makes me think of how much more I don't wanna come back
Then at the end of the night I know you will be waiting with open arms

-Dar-Dar

From The Beat: Will only a lover keep you out of jail? It's messed up that the system isolated you from the rest of the world, but isn't now the perfect time to start thinking about yourself? Or do you think it's wise to see yourself through the eyes of the ones who are waiting for you to get out?

I Wish My Dad Was Here

Hey this is Shantea aka Tay Tay. My dad died when I was 7 years old and when he died I had to go live with my granny and she did me very bad.

I wish my dad was here because if he was I will not be in jail right now so much stuff has happened in my life that sometime I don't want to be in life because to me when you are in jail and someone writes you or come see you that make you feel really good but if no one come, now you feel like no one care.

-Tay Tay

From The Beat: That's a great reason to want your father in your life. If it's not too personal, how did your grandmother do you very bad? We just don't hear about grandmothers doing bad things too often and were curious as to what she did. What would your father want you to do if he were here?

Visits

I think that visits would be the most important to me. Of course all of them are important but if I had to choose, it would be visits. During a visit you get to talk to your loved ones face to face and it just feels better than talking over the phone.

During a visit your loved ones can give you mails and pictures. But a phone call you can talk to your friends or more loved ones. I rather talk to my loved ones which would be my mom and if she came to visit me it would make me really feel good. I want to see how's she doing because on the phone you can't really know how she's doing except what she tells you. I rather see how she is and get a hug from her something you can't do over the phone.

-Ramon

From The Beat: From what you described here we can see why you would like visits rather than mail or phone calls. Do you ever feel like going home with your family when it's time for the visit to end? What kind of pictures do they bring up for you to see when they do come visit?

Education In The Hall

Education in this hall is horrible. The curriculum is plain, and nothing new. We don't learn anything we need in real life. For example, language or English class. Yeah, we have those classes in here, but it isn't the level I need to increase my knowledge.

Language? We can get better jobs if we learn the majority language people speak. You don't need a Latin class where barely anyone speaks it. Spanish/English/Chinese are the languages we should be concentrating on.

The classes are small. They're something I learned in the 8th grade. Some people in here don't know the curriculum, but I don't blame them. I blame the education in this Hall. I mean, why do the ones who know the curriculum have to repeat the same topic again? I know all this, and yet I'm not learning anything.

I think this education center needs a class where students who know the curriculum go to a separate class to get the education we really need. We need math class where we can do sales taxes in our heads instead of using a calculator, language class where we can learn to communicate with people who don't speak English, English class where we can use proper grammar than the slang most youths use.

I hope this helps everyone understand what the education this hall provides compared to real schools.

-Chowsee

From The Beat: We think these are good suggestions. One of the problems is that nobody keeps a record of what you've already learned, or where you're going to go after you leave the unit so that you can continue the lessons that were started there. As long as it's this way, the only "solution" is to go to school on the outs, and stay on the outs! (By the way, NOBODY speaks Latin. It is considered a "dead language." On the other hand, it is the foundation of many other languages, including Spanish, Italian, French and Portuguese.)

Basketball

When I was six, I had my first basketball. I love to play basketball. It's my first sport. I went to the gym every day. I had a lot of fun. It was the best days of my life.

-LeJhaun

From The Beat: We bet it's more fun to play basketball on the outs than inside, right? So what are you going to change when you get out of here so that you can play basketball in freedom?

If You Live The Life You Want To Lead, How Will Your Obituary Read?

I know that when I get out, I'm never coming back! I don't wanna mess up my future by livin' my life in and out of the system. I'm not tryin' to follow in the footsteps of my other family, I wanna be somebody. I am going to be somebody!

Since I've been here my depression has motivated me to get my shhh straight when I get out. I'ma finish high school with a diploma, take a year off so I can kick it wit' my friends and family. Then I'ma go to college and pursue my dreams of happiness so that I can prove to everyone and myself, that I can accomplish whatever I set myself out to do. I expect more of myself and getting caught up in this lifestyle is not gonna do shhh for me! So eff all the bullshhh, I'm down for my homies but right now, I gotta do me! It's what's best!

-Princess Harmony

From The Beat: Your piece and the title to that piece don't quite go together, so let us ask you some questions that may string them back together. From what you want and where you think you'll be, what will your obituary say about you once you've passed away? Will it say that you were down for your homies from beginning to end? Or will it say you got a college degree and became a major success in whatever job you plan on getting? Basically, when you die, what will people say about you?

My Highlights

My highlight of the juvenile time is when I go to court and see my girl because that let me know she on my side. And the second thing is when I call my mom it make me happy because I know she alright without me around.

A visit is more important to me because you actually get to see your loved ones, talk to them, and hug them. this what goes on on my block: drugs, violence, for an example weed, crack, fights, parties. What attracts me to the block is love everybody is in the same position the ghetto trying to make it to the top and survive these are the people on the block family and friends.

I found my block by growin' up on for almost my whole life. The block is only safe if you know what you're doin' and this what I see through my eyes it a better way to deal with the block and what ever you feel like the right choice is make it.

-Lc

From The Beat: Do you think people judge you by where you're from too much? We feel like it's sad for people to live and die for a block that really isn't theirs. Would you say your block is yours? What do you love more, your girl, your family, or your block?

My Dad...

My dad's a 38 yr old gang banger in a wheel chair. He's been in a wheel chair all of my life. He's been gang bangin' all of my life. I sometimes hate being his daughter cause he's too over protective over me. I just hope the streets don't kill him. Me I'm the younger girl version of my dad. When I was lil' I wanted to be just like him and look where I ended up. I just hope 1 day I could get my shhh straight and move on with my life.

-Lil' Nicoya

From The Beat: It's sad to hear that your father is still gang-banging, especially since it would be nice to have someone positive to look up to as a young woman. Does seeing everything your dad went through make you want to keep gang-banging or eventually stop? Do you think you'll lead that life forever?

My Dad

I really don't have much to say. I mean he was never in my life I really don't know him but any ways I got over that a long time a go when I was young I really never tripped off him any way.

My pop ain't no real man because of the fact he didn't take care of what was his, he didn't even come visit me, call me, nothing. I mean he picked his friends over me and his drugs over me. What kind of dad is that.

-Man Man

From The Beat: It's a shame that your father was never there for you. In fact, it even makes us mad. What do you think would've been different if he acted like a real man and put you first in his life?

My Dad

What's up with the beat this is Enano today I'm 'bout to talk 'bout my dad. I'm just like my dad, my dad is just a coo person every body like my dad, my dad is like my best friend.

He's been here for me every time I been locked up, my dad is someone I can depend on at all times no matter what situation I'm in he's going to be by my side forever that's why I love my that. Happy Father's Day Pop's much love from your son.

-Enano

From The Beat: Wow... we don't often hear about fathers who are actually doing what needs to be done when it comes to raising a child. What lessons has your dad taught you that you still keep with you today? How do you think your dad feels about your current situation?

My Life

What it do do Beat? It's Cuddy, main, straight from that grimy city. Well, I wanna talk 'bout mah life in the outs. Man, it was coo' as hell out there, always posting it and having a good time sipping on some Hen' and smoking on some urkle. But all that its ova 'cause I'm in this punk-ass hall.

Befo' I got caught up in this shhh, I found that a lil' man was comin' into mah life. I was tripping hard as hell, and the messed up shhh is that me and mah baby mama weren't together. She was with this punk-ass ninja at the time when she told me a young one was arriving. I couldn't even sleep at night. Just thinking of mah lil' man made me hella happy. Thinking of all that was a trip. I told my ninjas 'bout this and they seemed more excited than me. They started telling me names fo' mah young one, making jokes and shhh.

But now I'm in this place missing out on hella shhh, 'specially to watch mah baby mama's tummy grow. When I get out, I'm finna be doing it big but safe. I'm finna do my program so I can get out this damn system. I hope my young one comes out healthy, and I pray to God that I'm there when he comes to this world.

Well, that's all I have to say, Oh yeah, I love mah baby mama even though she did some messed up shhh in the past. But forget it. Gotta look forward an' go on. I'm out.

-Cudd

From The Beat: How responsible is it of you to drink and smoke on the block, let yourself get locked up and take orders from the man, and then bring yet another life into this world! Being a father is the most difficult and responsible task you will ever have in your life, and by starting this way, you haven't demonstrated you're up to the task. Any male can create a baby, but it takes an adult to be a father. So, before you do anything else, get your own act together, and move out of the childish scene that you miss so much, and recognize that you have to become a man. Just wanting a child is not enough. Yes, it makes you and your homies excited, but what he needs is a father at home to guide and protect and teach him. Can you be that man?

Mail

Mail is the most important to me because you can read letters over and over again. Also in letters you can write about anything and it's sometimes easier for people to write about how they feel and can describe things better in writing. But then again visits can be good too cause you can hug the person and see them.

But to keep it real I don't think there's anything good in being locked up even if you get to write letters, call people and have visits!

-Mail

From The Beat: That's interesting, most people wrote that they like visits better, but we can understand why you would like receiving letters better. And what you bring up about it not being cool to be locked up in the first place was very wise. What do you hear from people that really care about you when they write letters?

When I Am On My Block I See

On my block, basically what goes on is people out hanging around tryna get a million and get out the hood, you see people at the candy house, the gym recreation, you see thugs out blowin' weed, and riding around in there nice car on some rims.

Or you see a few thugs patrolling the block, but really sometimes, it's barbecues, but really it's silence when you come thru my hood. I see a lot of unhappy people.

-Jay Pitt

From The Beat: Why do you think people are so unhappy on your block? Do you think you'll be living on your block forever? How many people do you know that have got a million on your block without getting shot or going to jail?

Can Money Buy Happiness?

On some real shhh, money really cannot buy you happiness, 'cause to me, money only buys things people want that will make them happy for a while, a day, or a minute. At the same time after they buy it they be like, "That was a waste of freaking money." At the same time people that don't have money but at the same time they are happy of it in a kind of way.

But people with money, they be happy, but when they spend they shhh, they get mad and be like, "I need more money."

-Young Majic

From The Beat: Interesting point of view, Young Magic. What are the things you like doing, the things that make you happy, that don't require money?

I Like Mail

The thing that is more important to me out of mail, phone calls, or visits is mail. The reason that that is more important to me is because with phone calls it's a fifty, fifty chance that the person that you tryna reach might or might not pick up.

With visits, the reason I don't really like that, because sometimes the people that you want to visit you, can't! With mail you can write to whoever and as many times as you want. That's the reason I like mail better than visit and phone calls.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: That's interesting... Who do you write that can't come to visit you? Do you think that they don't let certain people visit you for a reason or do you think that's one of those rules they have in place just to mess with you? Who do you like receiving a letter from most?

RIP To My Cousin

RIP to my big cousin R.B. Man, he was a good ninja. He liked cars and dirt bikes, but he was sittin' in his can on Bayshore and they pulled up on the side of his van and started shooting. He lived for a day and then he died.

But before that, I remember when we was riding the gopeds and I fell and broke my finger and he took me to the hospital.

-Tray

From The Beat: What else can you tell us about him? Can you tell us why he was targeted for murder? Can you tell us if his murder made you want to change anything about how you live your life?

When People Die

People don't know how other people feels when they lose somebody. Like just this year my goon died when I was locked up and it hurt me real bad because we were hella close. That is why people don't need to do dirt in another person's 'hood and die at a young age like 16-21.

-Young Magic

From The Beat: We wish people would stop hurting and killing other people, wherever they are. As long as we only care about those we know and love, but don't care about those that other people know and love, things won't change. Do you ever do the kind of dirt you feel so bad about when it's done to you?

If I Never Joined A Gang...

Sometimes I wonder if I wouldn't join a gang how would my life had been. I would probably be at home right now not trippin' about shhh. But this is my life since a youngsta. About just as I entered teen years, I started hanging out with the homies. Next thing you know, I was part of the gang.

I stopped going to school just to kick it with the homies and kick it on the block every day. It was a hobby. I was on the block 24/7. But one day I got caught. I knew I was gonna get caught sooner or later. I did my time and got out. When I got out I was dumb and went back to the same thing I was doing. After a month after I got out, I came back in here just doing my time. It sound kind messed up but I'm just living the life of a soldier

-Cartoon Soldier

From The Beat: If you're living the life of a soldier, who are you at war with? Aren't you now living the life of a pseudo-slave? Did you "enemy" put you in this box? Just think about how young you were when the OGs defined your world for you, telling you who your enemies were, what your "cause" was, and basically how things would turn out. When you were a child, you thought as a child. But now it's time to put away childish things and start thinking like a man.

I Will Not Do Wrong Thing Again

I want to go home, but I have one more thing about the hearing aid. I can hear people talk, but people don't know how to say. I talk too fast. If I wear (my) hearing aid, I also talk too fast, it's the same.

I am very crying about my mom, dad, and family. I have to go home. I stay here too long. I have to go home and go to summer school. I will never do wrong thing again. If I go home I will not do wrong thing again. I come in one time at YGC. I will never come YGC again.

-Kinson

From The Beat: Well, you ARE home, so now it's what you do that will tell us if you're going to keep this promise of never coming back here again. We sure hope we never see you locked up again. And we also hope you learn to speak more slowly!

Whales Vs People

I think it is a 50/50 percent because some people love whales but at the same time they love their family more than the whales. But me, I love my family more than whales because if a whale dies and a human person dies, the whales will be put on to more than the humans will because the whale is more exclusive.

-Young Magic

From The Beat: Why do you think so many people feel so sad when they read about an animal that gets hurt or dies (whether it's dog, a cat or a whale), but they don't feel the same way when they read about a human being in the same position?

What I've Had To Relearn

What I learn when I was little? I learned that I ran away from home in 5th grade, and I got in trouble by my mom. Just waned to go out with my friends for the night. And I never did it again. I left 5th grade to go to the movies. If I got in trouble, I would have been not in trouble and stuff. That why I'm doing what I'm doing.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: We can't really understand everything you're trying to say here. Is it because you got in trouble that you're doing what you're doing? What are you doing?

Dope Sellers Deserve Their Money

Well, when this topic came across my mind, it caught my attention because a lot of people earn stuff and they deserve it. That just like people working with suits on, going into big buildings downtown. It ain't different than somebody selling dope on the streets. They still making their money, either way it go.

Some people see it in different ways, because I know people that hustle to this day and they still bring money to the house. So, if people working, I feel that they deserved it, because they hustling for it both ways.

-Young Rico

From The Beat: We can think of at least one BIG difference between those "suits" who work in offices downtown, and "selling dope on the streets" — and that is that the latter is against the law! So, it might be "the same" in theory, but in practice the money the dope seller "earns" is done at the risk of his or her own freedom, something that's more precious than money.

Stayin' Out

W'assup wit' Da Beat? It's ya boy, Jigg, holdin' it down up in dis unit three thang, maine. Yeah, I makin' it sound good, but it really ain't. But I am kinda glad dat I am here, because ah know dat ah would be out dere, holdin' da clappa, doin' some ol' hot-ass shhh. But it bad, 'cause you can't do what chu wanna do, like sleep.

Man, I'ma young ninja. I am used to wakin' up when ah want, to goin' to da block wit' da big homies, and all dat otha, you dig? But yeah, they like dey wanna send a thug to a grouper, but ah ain't diggin' dat, so you know ah gotta do it movin', ya heard? But, chea, though. Ah can't wait to ah get back to tha block, so ah could get back to da grimy style, maine, an' stay duckin' da law, feel me? But, chea, stay down 'til you touch down.

-Jigg

From The Beat: Yes, we can see how successful you've been "duckin' da law." When we read a piece like this, you don't have to tell us you're young. We can see it in how you think. When recognize your own responsibility for putting you here or in a group home — away from the block and the people you love — then you'll have a chance to stay free. But as long as you can't wait to "get back to da grimy style," then prepare yourself for giving away your freedom more and more.

Can Money Buy Happiness?

Sometimes money can be good for certain situations but it all depends on what the situation is. Money can buy material things. But God also said don't fall in love with money; that's never good.

Money comes and money goes. Money can't buy friends or family. You can have a big house and cars with no one to go out and share it with, not even share it, just dip around a few corners.

-Glamma Chick

From The Beat: It's hard not to let money become the most important thing in your life, especially when you don't have much. But we agree with you that loneliness hurts even when you're rich, and that being surrounded by those you love is the richest treasure of all.

Does Money Buy Happiness?

For some, money is all people need to be happy, For others, money is not the world. Unfortunately, society has made it almost impossible to live without money. I personally think that money cannot buy anything that MAKES happiness. Money buys material objects and some people are happy with materials

-Non-Material Girl

From The Beat: What makes you happy, if not the things that money can buy?

Can Money Buy Happiness

To me money can't buy happiness. Happiness to me is being able to wake up the next day. Money is great, but life is better.

-Joann

From The Beat: You can do much more with this in one hour than the three sentences you gave us. Add some effort, please.

Education In The Hall

While you locked up as a minor, 'specially in juvie, you learn things from being locked up. But one thing that is messed up to me is that I learned more stuff in juvie school than I did in a regular public school. I also learned that there is people that want to help you instead of just locking you up. I also learned that they genuinely want to help you and it goes past a paycheck.

-Gold M

From The Beat: How did you learn that there are people who genuinely want to help you? How are you taking advantage of what those people have to offer?

Like Mother, Like Son

Well, I was relearn that I was suppose to do what I need to do. 'Cause my mom always say do the right thing and keep your hand to yourself. But when I got older I forgot about that 'cause the people I kick it with led me to the wrong path, doing drugs and stuff like that.

But for some reason my uncle, who's my mom's brother, told me that I was going down the same path as my mom 'cause she always kick it with her friend did drugs and sell. And that hurts 'cause you wouldn't think your own mother would've done that. But I wasn't in her life 'cause I wasn't alive 'cause she pass away when I was eight.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: Do you want to follow your mother's path? How did she die when you were eight? What do you think your uncle was trying to tell you? Are you listening?

How I Want My Family To See Me

I would want ma fam to look at me like, "She was shy and loving and happy. I love her. She was nice. Outstanding, fun.

I love ma family. I do not want to die.

-Missia

From The Beat: How do you show your family that you love them? What does it show them when you do things that allow the system to take you away from them?

You Reap What You Sow

As you get older you learn from your experience. As you're a child, you learn what's right to wrong. You choose your path the way you want to live your life. People give you advice, it's up to us to take it. You reap what you sow. Life is what you make it.

-Lil' Bipp

From The Beat: This is too short to be one of your better pieces, Lil' Bipp. There is so much more you could have done with this, such as describing the path you've chosen... and the path you hope to choose from here on out.

Can Money Buy Happiness

I don't buy happiness. I'm not a trick. I don't think that money can buy happiness because all money and good money. having money is part of being happy. Money makes me happy to be able to buy my daughter stuff and see her happy.

-Lala Tupe

From The Beat: Well, it's nice that you can buy your daughter stuff, but in the long run, there's only one thing to make your daughter happy, and that's you home with her providing her the love and guidance every child needs from her mother.

Science And Biology

The things we learn in class are pretty easy and the teachers are a little cool. I wish I could start school all over again so I could learn more. I would like to learn more about science or biology. I really like astrology too.

-Young Speedy

From The Beat: What is keeping you from learning about the things you're interested in? There are hundreds of books about all of these subjects, so go for it!

Life Changing Experiences

Being in juvenile hall has been changing my life since my first time ever coming here. After I got out, I took two steps forward and four steps backwards. I started to continue to keep coming consistently. As I became more used to juvenile, I started to realize that I'm spending a lot of time as a slave to California. Then as I started to miss a lot of good things like, a chance to be a child, growing up in an institution, and miss all of my females and being around a lot of ninjas...

But as we continue to do things that could really hurt us in the end because we pretend to act like we don't know what's the truth but all we really need to do is wake up and taste the coffee.

-Fred-B

From The Beat: It sounds like you're describing two problems, one being the things that you do to bring you inside, and the other an unwillingness to own up to one's responsibility for the choices he's made. Does this thinking translate into any kind of different actions when you touch down?

What I had To Relearn

I relearned how to play cards. 'Specially drive cars. I hadn't drove in a while, so I had to relearn how to drive cars, reverse, parallel parking and how to turn blinkers on and follow speed limit and stop at stop signs. Follow the street laws.

-Del'von

From The Beat: You mean you actually forgot that you have to follow driving laws when you're behind the wheel? Well, anyway, we're glad you're taking that seriously because we hate people who drive and play at the same time...

Whales vs. People

Yes, we get lock up all the time and you don't see hundreds of people outside of the halls. but some stupid whales get caught in the Bay and hundreds of people line of crying over them.

-Cj

From The Beat: One sentence in a two-hour workshop is the lazy answer to this question. Why do you think what you described is the way it is? If people are crying about whales but not about you, are the whales really "stupid"?

Love For A Lot Of People

I deserve a lot of thangs, like going out of jail and to be with my family. Some people care about a lot of people like yo' mom and dad. Some people love Fat Thug. I get love for a lot of people and my family. Love Fat Thug always.

-Fat

From The Beat: Sometimes, we want to ask you if you have love for the one person that matters most, and that is yourself!

Whales Vs. People

Me myself, I don't really care about whales right now 'cause it seems that they care more about the whales than us. We are people but ain't nobody trying to help us. We want to go home to our families and they want to keep us here. I rather be at home instead of missing all these holidays.

-Gold M

From The Beat: The whole idea of a jail, especially a juvenile jail, is to make you realize just how much you are giving up by not being at home. Focus on your own contribution to the consequences you're living through, and then you'll know how to keep yourself free.

Sold A Dream

What's up wit ya, Beat? This yo' boy Skindonesia that ninja here to talk to ya about how it feel to be sold a dream by a female. If you ain't never fell. I'm first to tell ya how it feel. For me I was really feeling this chick and she was acting like she wasn't liking this ninja.

But when I went to jail. she wrote me and said she was gone hold me down. So I said why not. I need a girl to write me. Anyway she was sayin' that she loved me and shhh, so I am like, "Prove it." So she start giving moms money to buy me shhh while I go in the Ranch. I got kick out and then I went back to the halls. While I'm in here, I hear she got another ninja name put on her arm.

-Skindonesia

From The Beat: You allowed yourself to be taken from the free world (and her) and put in the box, so we're not very impressed by the level of commitment that either one of you has shown for the other.

I Love Money

I make big money when I'm on the block every day because I'm Fat Thug. I love money because I buy a lot of stuff out there. Money is my favorite because hella shhh. Everybody love Tat Thug 'cause I'm star out here doin' big thing. Holla at ya boy.

-Fat Thug

From The Beat: All right, Fat Thug, you asked us to holla at our boy, so we're going to holla at you. We haven't seen you make any money! Instead, we've seen you here year after year, putting money in the pockets of the system... costing us taxpayers money to feed you! It's way past time to make these words more than just words. Stop costing us money by getting yourself locked up!

No Time To Waste

When I first was born I had heart surgery two times. When I was grown up, I had a hard time as a kid. And now that I'm grown up. I been shot so I don't got nothing to live for.

-Illy Ack

From The Beat: Well, if you've cheated death this long, there must be a reason for it. You have everything to live for, you just don't know it.

Money

To me money can buy happiness because I can buy stuff. I can buy me a house with a nice car, a big screen TV, PS3, 2001 table, and other stuff that can be in the house. I can take vacations like to Las Vegas. I always wanted to go there even though I ain't old enough to gamble. Money can get me weed and drank that make me happy. I can buy slap for the car like two 12 in. sub woofers that be coo' for me. I can buy my girl stuff and that will make her happy. So money can buy happiness.

-Kizzer

From The Beat: Okay, we can see how all those things could make you happy. But if your girl leaves you for another guy, will you still be happy even with all those things you bought? Can rich people be unhappy?

Money

Money can buy happiness for some people that really need money in their lives. Yeah, you need money to be happy because if your mom's B-day comes, you going to be happy to get her a present from your own money you earned. At one point I'm happy without money.

-Young O

From The Beat: Of course it's nice to be able to buy your mom a present, but because you gave the system power over you, it is now taken from your mother the one thing she truly valued, which was you. If you gain your freedom and keep it, you will be giving her the best present she ever wanted.

Education In The Hall

I feel all right about the education. I mean, I don't go to school when I'm out, so I know I learned a little something in school here.

-Marita

From The Beat: The most important thing you could learn in here is to go to school when you're out!

Money Is What You Need

Money is all you need to get anywhere in life. You need money to get whatever you want to make you happy. You can also be happy without money, money just makes it better in ways. Money feels good when it's in your hands "Ya Dig" I'm out.

-Vago

From The Beat: Sure, money feels good when it's in your hands, but when you let money make your freedom slip through your fingers, then it doesn't feel that good after all.

Ready To Prove I'm Innocent

Q-vole? What's up wit it? This be young Termite coming from that max unit 7. I'm hella mad right now because the staff be tryna play us and shhh. I'm already on the split program due to gang rivalry on the unit so we only come out half the time. Then the staff be playing us and cuts our rec time, so I'm hella mad.

As if that wasn't bad enough, these damn walls be having us crazy, stressing big time. I go to court on Friday and it feels like they ain't doing shhh with my case. I been locked up since Feb. 10, but I'm still tryna fight my 707 case. They tryna try me as a adult. That some bs.

But the point is, these halls are hella bootsy and I'm just waiting to get proven innocent. Well, to all the homies and homegirls, stay up and don't get in trouble. And to my baby, I love you. Thanks, Beat, for letting me get this stuff off my chest.

-Termite

From The Beat: We hope that the system works the way it's supposed to work, and that you will be freed when they determine you're innocent. But what we want to know is, even if you didn't do this thing, do you plan to make any chances in your life to reduce your contact with the criminal justice system?

Jail Stress

Being in jail is stressful because you got a lot of rules. People tell you to do things you do not want to. Shhh be going in the world.

-Harvey

From The Beat: When will it become stressful enough to stop you from doing the things that lead here?

What I Deserve

What's up, Beat? This be Cartoon from San Francisco. First off, let me send my respect to all... now that's out of the way, I'm drop some lineas about today's subject — what do I deserve? I feel I deserve my respect. I respect people I love and they respect me.

If somebody don't get out of pocket (disrespect) me, I got no reason to get out of pocket with him. Like they say, you only get what you put out.

Well, it's time to go. Alrato.

-Wes

From The Beat: What are the characteristics of a respectable man or woman? Can you respect someone you disagree with? Someone you don't love?

Changin'

What it do with The Beat Within? Me, shhh, just chillin', thinkin' hella hard. Man, this time that I'm doing right now got me really thinking about life, my family, girls, and cars and shhhh, All that stuff I'm missin' right now lucked up in this hole.

-Al Bundy

From The Beat: We can't tell whether you're writing what you think we want to hear, or whether there's some serious thought behind this four-sentence piece, actually more an introduction than a piece. If this is an indication of the effort you're putting in by "thinkin' hella hard," then you'd better think harder!

The Cuban Missile Crisis

With the U2 satellite, they (in the US) saw the missiles in Cuba. The Soviet Union and the US wasn't beefing. John F. Kennedy couldn't compromise with Castro (President of Cuba) and all them (Cubans.) It started in October, 1962. They (JFK and the Americans) refused to let the Russians (put more missiles) into Cuba, and JFK ordered a blockade. Khrushchev (President of the Soviet Union) sent JFK a message, and they came up with a compromise seven days later.

-Young Jeff

From The Beat: It's great that you're studying the Cuban Missile Crisis in your history class. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a huge deal at the time it happened. President John Kennedy ordered all the Marines in the US down to Florida, in case the crisis in Cuba blew up. For more than a week no one knew if World War III was about to go down. But Kennedy had some special intelligence that let him know the Soviets weren't prepared to go to war, and Khrushchev withdrew all the Soviet missiles from Cuba, and the US took our missiles out of Turkey, so both sides compromised.

Keepin' Us In

We stay stuck in this system, because they won't let us out. They categorize us by giving us labels to make us be equal. We all gang members, drug dealers, thugs, shhh like that. They don't want us to be ourselves, because once we start trying, too, they try to bring us down to those simple categories. And they're become stupid (idiots) that really try to live up to that shhh. They try to be that and nothing more. What I think is if you gon' do something, do it right, don't half-ass shhh. The sky's the limit, so you might as well keep reaching.

-Birdman

From The Beat: You may be right, that some authorities in the system try to stigmatize and discriminate against all of you, but since you see through them, why don't you just ignore them and stay the individual you are? But maybe you should ask yourself, what are you doing, regardless of the system, to sabotage your own life?

Lost, Never Found

Some people are out searching for a better life, but can't find it. I'm not saying I'm searching for a better life, 'cause I'm not. But to y'all out there searching and not finding nothing, it's because y'all looking in the wrong place. This street life ain't it, because these last couple of years the ruthless ninjas are locked up, dead, so the real will be back soon, man, and it going to get ugly.

And for some you real ninjas need to settle down, get a wife, and have some kids, 'cause it getting more militant by the day. I got all this, but I need to accomplish some of my goals by any means necessary, 'cause I'm a militant ass ninja. I'm gone stay safe and solid.

-Too Militant

From The Beat: It's good that you're satisfied with your present life, and your advice for the homies to get their lives together is very wise. Why, in your opinion, are the streets becoming more militant? What can you or anyone do to calm the streets down? Stop the gang wars? Keep it from getting uglier out there? How will you keep yourself safe, when you're free again?

Money

I think money can buy a lot of things for me and other people. I love money. I honestly think that I wouldn't've came here. But us people as not rich care about money too much, people that are rich don't really worry about it. I admit I care about my money too much. I feel it can and will do a lot for me. It benefits me.

-D-M

From The Beat: The benefits of money are obvious. It gets us the things we want. But what if we want something that isn't a thing, something that money doesn't buy? Isn't coming here one of the deficits your love of money leads to?

Saved By The Grants

We are all glad The Beat is saved by some grants! The Beat is a good program. It helps us! Well, continue with the good work!

-Lil' Eric

From The Beat: Thank you for your sweet words of support. We need all the help we can get.

Our Work Don't Get Published

I haven't seen my work in The Beat for a couple of weeks. Is our work not good enough to be published? I think they should publish everything we write, unless it's really inappropriate. If our work don't get published, we feel our work isn't good enough.

-Lil' Eric

From The Beat: Given the size of the publication we've decided to limit the stories and poems we publish to those that are "standouts" or better. Amazingly, many of you writers have stepped up to the challenge.

I try my best to make it
through the night
and live today
But I'm upset, so I'm steady
wipin' tears away

People Care More About Whales Because They Could Become Extinct

I think people do care about whales more than people, because whales could become extinct and there are too many humans. All these humans are bad, because a lot of people like killing animals, so it will bring animals' extinction even quicker.

I think more people should be killed, because it will make the world a better place. I'm interested in how the whales swim down to the Bay. I don't support people that kill animals, but I support all the dumb people killing each other. That's why they invented gangbanging. LOL (Lots of laughs.) I wish all the whales will be safe swimming upstream. So, peace out.

-Chinatown Lifer

From The Beat: We know you're kidding about how more people need to die, but it's nice that you have a good heart for the whales. By now you must know that the whale mama and baby finally found their way back out of the Sacramento River, back to the ocean. You're right about how whales could become extinct, that's why there are transnational laws forbidding whalers from killing them, but men from some countries continue to hunt them.

Forget The World

I mean, the world just ain't gon' never change
So I just keep my head up and my (thoughts,) let 'em hang
Dang, I swear it's very rough out here for the youngstas
Like everybody against me, 'cause I'm a young thug
Dear Ant, why they have to kill Ant?
But I'm a keep you alive, ninja,
That's why this lil' ninja be bugging like it's no tomorrow
I try my best to make it through the night and live today
But I'm upset, so I'm steady wipin' tears away
And police got me under surveillance when and wherever
Wracking they brains, tryin' to figure where I'm getting that cheddar
I tell my family, "Just leave me a-damn-lone
I can handle all of my business, this lil' man grown"
But I try to forget about it and just stand strong
But if everything was cool, I wouldn't write this damn song
Forget the world

-Mike

From The Beat: You have our hearts for the loss of your homie, Ant. We can feel what you're going through, but you still claim to be a thug, so do you think somehow you're impervious to the destruction that's out there in the streets? If the police have you under surveillance, you're making their job really easy for them—you're down at the Ranch! Why don't you learn the lesson from your homie's death and stay out of the streets? The streets don't need your life, too!

School In The Hall? Pointless...

The way I feel about school up in da halls, main, is that it's pointless. I don't learn nothing because all the teachers do is teach us in circles. So let me take that back, I do lean. I learn that as long as I'm in the halls, I ain't gonna get no proper education.

-Maurice

From The Beat: Well, Maurice, if you actually learn that lesson and apply it by going back to school and staying on the outs, then you've learned something truly important.

How I Change The World

To change the world I have to change myself. By changing myself I have to learn how to communicate with other people and learn how to help others. By helping other people and talking and showing them into positive things that can help them to help others into doing the same.

For example, I can teach my kids with good and positive things and they will show their kids and so on.

-Montelongo

From The Beat: You make a very clear and to the point statement. You make us wonder if the only hope we have for the world to change in the most profound and sustainable way is to start treating children better. Children will one day be world leaders; how they are treated matters incredibly for the future of our world. Your example makes us think about this. What do you think?

This Change

Change is possible if you put your mind to it. For me, to change the world, first I need to make a better attitude for I could give respect to get respect. If I don't get respect, it doesn't mean that I should disrespect them too. It would just mean that I'm a better respectful man. There is a saying that goes like this: You could talk the talk or walk the walk. As a man, I would walk the walk and show a good example to other people.

-Raul

From The Beat: You make a very good point. If someone disrespects us, it says more about them then they realize. Why do so many people fret over not being paid the respect we think we should? It takes a lot of courage to be a different man. We're impressed.

Education Is Easy In The Hall

Education in the hall is easy because you can focus on your assignments. You can get help to understand your assignments. The teachers are like teachers on the outs. Teachers in here are cool most days; some days they have their moods.

-Creeper

From The Beat: Short and to the point. Thanks for your response. What do you think would make the schools on the outs better and more interesting for young students?

He's Nothing

My dad is nothing to me. He was never there when I was a little kid. He never taught me nothing growing up. He never taught me how to throw a ball or talk to a girl. He never helped my mom out with child support. T

he only thing he ever did to me was leave me hangin.

That's why when I have kid I am going to do everything I can to be there for him.

-Khi

From The Beat: Hey Khi Sounds like you know the kind of father you will be. It is great to hear this. We think too many people take their pain and suffering out on their own children. That is how the cycle of an unhappy family tree continues, right?

Education Here Is Okay

I think it is okay. It is kind of better because it's less people in a class so the teacher can help you more. First, you wait until you get an assignment, then you can have a pencil, and then you can get started. When you're done with the assignment, you tell the teacher you are done. Then the teacher will correct it and if it is right, he will give another assignment.

I would like to learn more than I know now. I can get more credits easier in the Hall.

-Am

From The Beat: If you were in charge, how would you make the schools out there better, and how would you make the school in here better?

Education In The Hall

Ever since I got locked up and been going to school I haven't learned anything. The assignments the teacher gives me is shhh that I already know. Therefore, I'm getting credits for doing absolutely anything. But, there is nothing I can do about it because I understand that certain students are on certain levels in certain subjects. I'm looking forward to going to school when I get out and do the right thing.

-Corn-Bread

From The Beat: The school must really be bad for you to look forward to going to school on the outside! Why do you think you (and so many young people) don't like going to school period, whether inside the hall or outside? What would you suggest to make school more interesting?

Brain Work

I would say the school at the hall is good. You can get more help with what you can do and cannot do. I have gotten most of my credit here. It is cool to get more help wherever you are. It is just harder on the outs to get that help.

-KK

From The Beat: Why do you think it's easier to get help with your school work when you're locked up than when you're free? How would you change those classes on the outs? What do you think keeps young people in school?

Grateful To My Dad

The thing that I learned when I was lil' was how it felt to have a dad. My dad left me when I was around 8 years old because he came home and caught my mom cheating on him. He brought a strap into the house and started shooting. He was supposed to get in about 10 years, but they gave him one year.

I'm glad that my dad came out and took care of me. He guided me through life. I think that if it wasn't for my dad, I probably would have been in jail most of my life. I know that I'm incarcerated right now, but I'm confident that when I get out, I will get back my job and back in school. My dad played a big part in my life. Without him, I probably would be another nobody in prison.

-Notorious

From The Beat: Not enough fathers take care of their children, so it is good for us to read that yours did — even if he did something terrible to put him in that position. How will you pass on the lessons your dad taught you to the next generation

Trying To Relearn Respect

One thing I still have not relearned is to respect. As I got older, it seems that it just disappeared. I think it is because of all the things I have been through. I've been through a lot. I've seen how shady the world and people can be.

I know how to get respect, but giving respect is the hard part for me. I guess that is the way the streets raised me. I'll probably relearn to respect one day.

-Most Vicious

From The Beat: The streets can be vicious teachers. Do you think all people are not worthy of trust, or is it the way some people are forced to live? Do you respect yourself? Why or why not?

What I Relearned

What I relearned in juvenile hall is how to behave in the correct manner. I'm talking about rules I forgot to follow and manners, and respect as well.

In juvenile hall, all this has changed. There are consequences for actions that you make. What we forget is to think before we act. That's why most of us are in here.

-Gabriel

From The Beat: We wish you had given us a couple of examples of the kind of rules you've had to relearn in here. Do you think if there were more serious consequences out there for things like missing school, fewer kids would end up in the hall?

If Only...

I'm a fool not paying attention
I should have listened to my parents
Then I would not be in this mess
This mess is getting me mad
But at the same time, I have learned a valuable lesson
That lesson is to pay attention to my parents
They always know when you're up to no good
Now I'm in the hall
Thinking how much I'm such a fool

-V

From The Beat: You're only a fool if you never learn the lesson that you say you've now learned. Knowing that your parents have your best interests at heart is not the same as doing what they tell you. That's much harder, so we hope you've truly learned that lesson.

Who Is Laughing Now?

This is Princess Davinna, coming at everyone with much love and respect!

I'm somewhat not feeling the topics today so I'm gonna write what's on my mind, which is this boy. Damn, it seems like everyone is getting locked up. I walk down the hall, see younger homies that have messed up; everyone's got to grow up one day and act right. Do good, and stop messin' with the homies in the hood 'cause when it comes down to it, your mom's the one there to pick you up when you're sitting in your cell on one, stuck!

He thinks he's a laughing boy on the streets, running around with his trigger toy. Now he finds himself behind four white walls with his roommate taking a shhh. His mama doesn't know he got locked up that night, so now she's gonna be pissed. Now he has more time to think about what he needs to do when he goes out to the free life. Maybe someday he'll live legit and find himself a wife. I hope he realizes this isn't the life he or anyone, including myself, should live. So I hope and pray that he gets to be free, and he doesn't put his life to destroy. But in the end, he will always know that he's the one and only laughing boy!

Well, Beat readers, time's running. But to all, stay strong and keep your head up. Much love and respect. It's not love, don't get it twisted, oh yeah.

-Princess Davinna

From The Beat: This is a great piece because we see the inspiration you had for it and then the story/flow of your homie. We really get to see your creative process here, which is the sign of a true artist. Plus, the fact that you're seeing younger and younger people in the hall is a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

Life After Death

As I think to myself about how I would want to be remembered, as I lay six feet deep, ain't all that hard. I would want to be remembered as the one that gave all he could and when he could; the one that didn't take if he couldn't repay; the one that had kids and they never hesitated or took a second to say I was their pops. But most of all, the one that never had regrets and did it all. So as I lay in pieces this is how I would want to be known.

-M Chingon

From The Beat: Looks like there are really three things you want written about you after you die: that you have a great character, that your kids are proud to be your kids, and that you have "no regrets." We hope these words don't get spoken for many, many years. But we have to ask whether it's true you really have no regrets? Is there nothing you would do differently if you had the chance?

Time is Running Out

Days turning into weeks
weeks turning into months
time is ticking but I'm not moving
I'm stuck while life on the outs is full of joy
all I do is think and set my mind on my baby boy and my life.
Life is getting harder by the day, especially being in a cage.
I'm missing my freedom, I'm missing my loved ones.
Whose keeping me strong and telling me to keep my head up?
It's hard when hating-ass females trying to hold me down.
But I'm trying to do good, taking care of business, not screwing around.
Doing my time, not letting the time do me.
Looking to God to set me free, so I could stop stressing off the hard times.
-- I'M SETTING MYSELF FREE --
Love you all, stay up and know only you could set yourself free. Cherish the time you have.

-Noel

From the Beat: This is a great poem and inspirational message about time and your own personal freedom. Even when you're not locked up, how can you stay free? Is it through your faith, you family or your own strength? Maybe all three.

Want To Do Well

Well what up Beat? What's crackin'? Well me, what I have to relearn is to be a good girl, 'cause I've been locked up since I was 12 and I was used to messin' up, but then I was out for two years and I started to do good.

-Payasa

From The Beat: Good luck in doing the right thing! It's not hard!

Money Can Not Buy Happiness

Money can not buy happiness because if so than I would buy houses, and cars, and weed, and I would have bailed myself out of this shhh hole place, because I am not happy here, because it makes my hair thick and nappy and I get hella booty thick too.

If money could buy happiness than I would be the sexiest, richest, happiest female on earth.

-Felisha

From The Beat: Even if you had the money to get what you want would you really be happy?

When Will I Be Free?

I lie on my bed and cast my head above
Looking at these walls no one loves
I wish I could be free but yet
I'm imprisoned behind walls while
People try to teach me a lesson
When will I be free? Never
Because I'm doing time for not
Being clever.

-Imprisoned

From The Beat: We can't believe you're here for not being clever. This poem shows us that you are very clever. So, maybe you should look closer at the activities that brought you here, and use some of that cleverness to figure out a way not do repeat the mistakes of the past and their consequences.

What's Wrong?

What's wrong with my people
They keep coming in and out like nothing's wrong
But really, all they need to do is stay out and stay strong
Me, I've been here for a month
And it feels too long
I feel so bad for my people
I should sing a song
Because none of us belong here
What's wrong, that's wrong.

-Locked Up

From The Beat: If none of you belongs here, what changes can you make so that you don't end up here? What do you think is the appropriate response for whatever it was that got you locked up? What would help you the most to keep you from doing it again?

Girls Got Drama Too

Yadda what it do, Beat? See, I got this homegirl up in here. That dame, she be confused, knowing that she wants that, but then she sees that and wants that too. Girl be smilin' a lot, muggin hard, getting' frustrated at what… maybe 'cause there's too much she wants in this place. But, see, I don't roll that way: bouncing from here to there, getting caught up on more than one female. Maybe that's just the way I see it, but this situation is caught up between four and knowing that two of them feeling each other and the other two, well they're just there.

I don't know what to do. This girl be flirting with me and shhh, I be doing it back. I ain't going to be getting all sprung off her 'cause she be flirtin' with another female. But this girl cute, she's got dimples, a smile that no matter how hard I try not to, I smile back. She be getting a smile on bigger than ever with this other female. But wait, that's her "homegirl" right… I ain't trippin', well not hard, but I be cruisin' on her. But if she wants to, I'm down to. I could tell her was up but I'm sure she knows.

It's up to her because I'm tired of going for it first. Just to let you know, girl, I like you and if anything were to happen, girl, I can count on you to be true. I ain't saying that anything would go down for sure but I'm just saying… yadadamean? Well with an X and an O – yo girl Cupcake gots to go.

-Cupcake

From The Beat: It's smart to recognize when someone that you have feelings for might be thinking about someone else. You say your homegirl is confused, if you really care about her, how do you think you can help her get clarity? At the end of the day, all you can do is tell her how you feel, which you do beautifully in this piece.

Happiness Comes From Within

I don't think money can buy you happiness. I think happiness comes from within and you can be happy no matter what your situation is. Growing up, my family was not rich and although I did not have a lot of nice stuff, I found happiness is other ways. I realized that what you do to try make money (the fast way) matters.

-Khi

From The Beat: You say it matters how you make your money, but you don't explain what you mean. We hope you mean that the fast money wasn't worth losing your right to be with that family you love so much. That is a lesson that can serve you throughout your life, if you listen to it.

Can Money Buy You Happiness?

Heck no!. If money could buy happiness, then I wouldn't be here right now. I would be at home with my family or possibly be with my boys chillin'. But money, nah. I would have been out five months ago with my attorney and all. If I had hella money, and I was out with my lady, I would buy her whatever she wanted. She would be happy, but not because I bought her something with my money. She would be happy because, at the end of the day, she knows I love her!

-Evek

From The Beat: You're right, whatever gift you buy for your lady means nothing without your love. So, how can you show her you love her? By doing whatever you did to give the system the power it needed to remove you from her, weren't you showing her that something else mattered more than her? Do you plan to make any changes in the future to keep this from happening again?

Wake-Up Call

I had a wake-up call before I got locked up, but I didn't take it. I was in downtown San Jose, and I almost got shot in the head because the person I was with had a .357 and put it to my head. Even though that happened, I still wanted to live my crazy life. I didn't realize that God was giving me a wake-up call. But I didn't care; I was still kickin' it, doin' me to the fullest. But I ended up in here. It took me to get locked up to get my head clear off all the drugs. But, I got a second chance, my wake-up call is now that I still have my life. I'm gonna do right.

-Skull Head

From The Beat: Real success comes when we realize our mistakes and are ready to change our ways. Having that gun pointed at your head must have been incredibly frightening, but now you can always carry that experience as something to move forward from.

Thankful For J-Hall

I need to get my head right, gotta stay off the drugs. I'm thankful for J. Hall because I realized here, my life I love. It's keeping me off the streets and safe even though I'm locked up in a little space. But I'm thankful that the staff really cared, because coming here my life was spared.

I want to give thanks to all the staff because you were here for me when I cried and laughed. I'm gonna miss you when I get out, but I won't be back and that's without a doubt.

-Skull Head

From The Beat: It seems like being locked up – even though it was hard – was a positive experience for you. Sometimes we have to remove ourselves from the situation anyway we can. How will you continue to have this positivity when you're back out around the same influences? Remember: you can always pick up a pen and paper and escape for a little while, wherever you are.

Money Ain't Everything

Money brings greed and makes people go mad. Material things make you happy for a coo' minute. But it gets old. Money ain't everything if you have no one to share it with, then what's it good for? People use you and take advantage of you when you got money. You can have all the money in the world, but it won't bring happiness. Trust you're just going to find a lot of fake-ass heads trying to be coo' with your money, not you.

Money brings drama and hella heads would be after you. Happiness is love, family, and friends. They're the ones that's gonna be real, ain't after your skrilla. But that's what I gotta say: money ain't everything. That's what makes heads go insane and die. So live life to the fullest, don't be trippin' off material shhh. Much love and respect.

-Nono

From The Beat: What a wise and true message, especially in this material world when it's easy to lose track of what's important – especially when you're struggling.

The Easy Route

Education here in the hall is not the same as on the outs. The classes here are pretty easy. I'm not going to lie I like easy. But I know that easy isn't going to get me through life. There are life obstacles that are going to be hard. I know that if I take the easy way I'm not going to get far in life.

This is to all going through hard times. Keep your heads up.

-Huera

From The Beat: Easy may be fine now, but as you know eventually you'll have to face difficult test, like when you return to school in the free world.

Commentary On Education In The Hall

When you are in juvenile hall school is mandatory, but the work you do there is so below grade level that if I was locked up for one month I would probably graduate high school. The assignments they give out is just like color or read. All we have to do is listen to the teacher lecture and just sit there.

Our work is so unappreciated and tossed to the side. They glance at it, do a half assed job grading it, then it gets thrown away.

On the outs I hate going to school. I almost never went, but when I have to go (in the hall) I'm glad it's easy. I just have to basically sit there and pretend to do something and just bullshhh through it until I get released. Sometimes I wish they would actually try to teach us something instead of treating us like we're juvenile or criminals like we're worth nothing.

-Mouthpiece

From The Beat: Why do you feel the work in juvenile hall school is unappreciated? Don't you think the teachers in the hall want to be working with you? Sounds to us like yo uare not trying hard either. Why don't you step up and take the schooling serious! Challenge yourself and challenge those who want to help!

The Telephone

The best form of connection to the outside world is phone calls. I like to make phone calls 'cause I get to hear my brother's voice and it makes me feel closer to the outside. But it sucks that I can only talk to them for five minutes and sometimes they end the call out of nowhere.

-Xnotoriousviet

From the Beat: Nothing like hearing your loved ones on the phone knowing what's really going on, in the "outs." It does suck that you can only talk to them for five minutes, but now that you are in here focus on what you can do to stay out, so you can talk to your brothers all day long when you are free.

Time Spent

I wake up in the morning, hoping I'll wake up at my house in my room but then I come to the realization that those are just dreams and they're untrue.

I pray to The Lord to get me through my days, giving him faith that he'll help me change my ways. I dislike the way people look at you here, such a menace walking through the halls. But there's nothing you can do about it, after all, we are indeed locked behind these walls.

I cherish every moment I live even if it's wasted time. All I know is the life I live when I get out surely won't be led by crime.

-Monica

From The Beat: You can hear the positivity in this piece, even under the powerful language about what it's like to be locked up. Even though your dreams dissolve in the morning, they can still remind of what you have waiting for you outside.

Hall Thoughts

Today I'm gonna write about the hall. Well this place sucks and I don't like being here, but I have to be here 'cause I've been doing a lot of stupid things. I have to be here 'cause I choose to do bad things and now I have to pay the consequences being here.

When I first came here to the hall a lot of people were saying "I don't wanna be here I hate this place I wanna go home with my mom I hate being locked up."

Juvenile hall is not made for you to like, in fact it is made for you to hate it. So stop acting like babies and do your time nobody likes to be locked up and if you do you are wrong, and even if you're right and staff says your not, you can't do anything about it, 'cause you are in jail. You might as well take it how it comes.

Just do your time and stop crying like babies. I ain't tripping for being here I'm just waiting to go home, not really I'm not going home but I hope so, I'm gonna go to court but if I don't go home I'm not gonna be tripping for that shhh.

-Lizandra

From The Beat: What are you going to do to avoid doing further "stupid things"? Of course people hate detention, so you will always hear people longing for home. As for those crying like babies, well, this too is apart of the jail experience.

Sad

What up Beaters? This is your girl Destiny from Gilroy! Well, I'm not feeling the topics but today I'm gonna write about when I seen my little brother Richy in the Clinic. Man, I cried. It's sad seeing my little brother here man. I need to get out already.

Shhh, I'm gonna go crazy! Today, I went to outside court. Me and my brother got transferred together. Man, I was pissed when we were both in the waiting room on the outside court. I seen my little brothers and shhh, I miss em! Tell me how sad this is to see your brother, you and your mom all in court, shackled? Damn, I cried and I seen my man's mom.

Well, I'ma cut this short. I love you. Keep yo' head up! Love the one and only.

-Destiny

From The Beat: Seeing your family also being held within the walls of the Hall must have been really hard. But you really bring that moment to life in this emotional piece. Hopefully your brother Richy will see this piece and it will inspire him to change his ways and start writing, too.

The Game

On a clever crusade,
trying not to play
looking down at the grave
as I slowly pray.
Why is life so grand
and then fades away.
Chaos and confusion,
when one dies and goes away,
but try to keep the faith
and pray everyday,
'cause life's not about playing
just live life day to day.
Try not to go crazy
and get put away.
'Cause your loved ones will hurt and pray,
so try not to play,
when it's your life
at the cost of the game

-Adam "Clever Crusade"

From The Beat: No life is serious business when it comes to spreading the good word to the community and beyond about this hard life. What is the secret for you to make it out of the system, let alone the game, where too many young souls are either six feet under or in a prison cell?

For Some Money Can Buy Happiness

Maybe for some people money can buy happiness, but I think it depends on how you were brought up and how you were raised. If you were born into a rich family you are most likely to be happy because your parents have so much, and what ever you ask for you're probably going to get it.

Like me I was raised by my mother and my older brother, and I always had food on the table and a roof over my head. I never got what I wanted and if I wanted it that bad I would have to earn it. I never really liked rich kids, because they just had to ask for something and most likely they got it. I don't think I could have been raised in a rich family because I like the way I am living today, and I am happy.

-Johnson

From The beat: The key word, Johnson, is how you are raised. This goes for every one rich or poor, and every one in-between. Most people young and old know the value of money and the hardships it takes to get money, but the key point again is how people were raised around money. Its good you are happy with the life you lead, but remember don't judge people by the money they have. Judge them by who they are inside.

Eyes On My Hood

In my hood there is a lot that goes on.
There is my homies and then there are my enemies.
There are little boys and little girls running around having fun,
but me I am always with my homies.
My block could be safe but then again it's not so safe, because sometimes we have to fight our enemies and most of the time it is not a fair fight. Every time I go out side my house I always have to watch my back because I'm in a gang and there are some enemies where I live, but it's not so bad.
My block is on the Westside of Albuquerque.
If my homies didn't live on my block I don't think it would be the same,
because they are the ones that make it fun sometimes.
Most of the time we are just walking around in the hood either looking for a fight, or looking for a good time.
My block is my home, and I love it.

-Angelo

From The Beat: That is good you love your block, but is that any way to live? Having to always watch your back when you walk out side your house? When you're walking around the hood with your "homies" looking for a fight is it worth the chance of one of them little boys or girls playing to get caught in the cross fire and get hurt or killed? Think of a way to change the behavior of your hood, so there is no chance at all of this happening.

True Love Is Priceless

To me money can and can't buy true happiness, and this is why. Money can buy happiness, but it depends what kind of happiness you are looking for.

If you want cars, houses, drugs, or chicks you will be happy.

If you want love, no, money can't buy it no matter how much money you have. Yeah, they might be in love with your money, but not you.

-Michael

From The Beat: Is having cars, house, drugs and chicks true happiness, or is it a cop-out to escape the true reality we live in? True happiness comes from unconditional love from the ones you care about. No amount of money can buy that.

Listen To Your Parents

When we are young we don't know
Until we learn something our
Mom's and Dad's teach us
Wrong from right it's not like we'll grow up over night
They tell us not to drink or do drugs
Our parents tell us so much some times it bugs
As we grow up some of us become little thugs
Believe it or not if you listen to your mom and dad
You'll have a great life guaranteed to be rad
I forgot a lot about my past if I remembered I'd have a blast

-Gringo Joe

From The Beat: The best advice you can use throughout your life is the advice from your parents. As the saying goes "Been there done that", most parents have. Use their advice have a "blast" and as you say "You'll have a great life guaranteed to be rad".

This Life

When I am on my block I see red and blue mostly, if you are not blue or red you are rolling solo. until you make your minds up.

The kids I see are working on the block or are just kicking it. Not me I usually am trying to make money in a bad way or getting a car that isn't mine.

I tried to change, but the game won't let me. I do what I have to so I have money in my pocket and for stuff that I want. The reason I do what I do is so I won't have to steal from others, but that is why I am always in the D-home trying to make it on my block.

-Junior

From The Beat: It's easier said then done, if you really want that change you need to make some serious choices. Getting money the bad way or getting the car that is not yours is the first step back to the D-home. It's not the game that's held you in, but your own personal gain with the bad money. Take a step back find a job, and earn the money you want. The key to it all is an education, with that you can get any job you set your mind to and have plenty of money to spare.

I Deserve Plenty

The way I look at it I deserve a lot of things good and bad. Like for instance I deserve time for all the stupid things I've done and got away with. I would say all the things I got away with and I would of got caught. I would be doing life, so I am thankful for not getting caught, because I only did it to help my baby and my girl and me stay alive.

I think I deserve another change because I'm doing my time for the crime I did and I hope I don't get judged for my past, but it happens and the only thing I can do is move on. Am I right?

-Michael

From The Beat: Michael the way to support your family is to be honest and be proud with what you do. Committing crimes to support your family is not the way to do it. Committing crimes to support your family will only take you away from your baby girl and the women you love. Change your ways, get and honest job, and be proud to be the father and husband you want to be.

Remember

If I would of remembered, what I was taught as a kid,
I wouldn't have lived the life that I did.
I didn't listen when they said "don't do wrong" but I
did, when my homies said "just come along"
I should of listened to what I was told,
but now I sit in this box, ice cold, now I'm dead,
I should of listened to what mama said.
Ever since I remember mama I could never please you,
I could never walk the path
you wanted me to, and I refused to listen.
Every time I watch you scream at the top of your lungs,
until you cry, even though I hated it
I think back now to myself. I never changed it,
Huggin' was my main hobby,
I bought a 3-8-0 just incase somebody robbed me.
Mama mad now, 'cause I got heat, pocket full of money,
new shoes on my feet,
picked up by the cops every time I leave the house
and I wonder why you're drunk passed out on the
couch.

-Codi

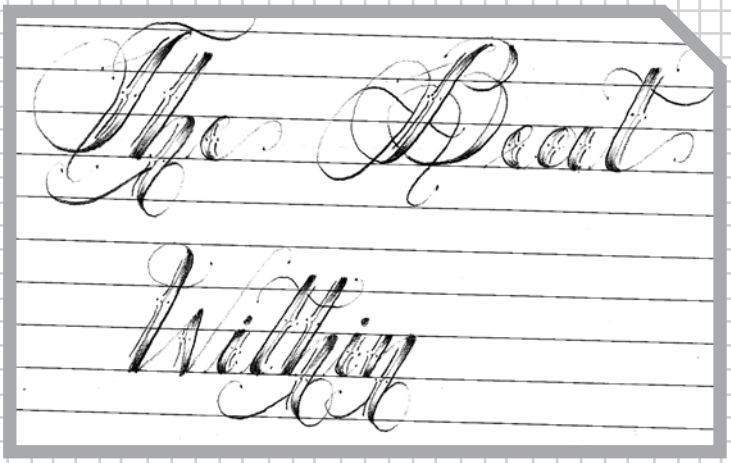
From The Beat: First off you're not dead. It may seem like it being locked up in a jail cell you call an "Ice cold box". You're more alive now then ever before, because you feel the pain in the life you lead. Change your hobby, get rid of that 3-8-0, and start living life in a positive way.

Happiness In Money?

To others money might be everything
To me money can't buy everything
Others are happy with material things, but as for me
money ain't a friend to me
Money's evil it causes deaths you see
What used to be friends is now enemies
It causes hate and deaths for free
Money brings happiness, but only for a matter of time
homie!

-Daniel

From The Beat: Money can't buy everything. Yes money may buy you (us) all the materialistic things we want, but in the end we only need love and support from our families. That is one thing money can never buy.



Can't Buy Me Love

Money can buy houses and cars, but money can't last forever. Money can't buy love, but money is good for a while. Like they say money makes the world go around and around. Truly it doesn't, but when people have money they're happy. When they lose the money they're mad, and people could die or go to jail over money. Money can't bring happiness to any body. You could only be happy for awhile, but when the money is gone you loose everything.

-Aaron

From The Beat: Money can buy houses, cars, and other items, but the one thing money can't buy is true love, true love from the heart and not the pocketbook. Money will always be out there, we just need to go out and earn it the honest way. Not through drugs, and violence, getting money illegally will only get you jail time or death in the end.

Education In The Hall

Working here,
drawing their
influences everywhere
Teachers help, as they can,
Students do get out of hand.
Others sit and do their work.
Some act out because they can,
never realizing it's a helping hand.
Do what you can to get ahead,
It's better then being on O-P
Staying in bed.

-Adam "Clever Crusade"

From The Beat: You know what works for you when it comes to education in the hall. Are you utilizing the support? Where do you stand when it comes to an education?

Respecto

Q-vo Beat? Well, one thing I think I deserve - because I've earned it – is Respecto!

I've been in the hood for years and done a lot for the homies. When a carnal got out the pinta, I was there to give him some cash so he could get on his feet. When something bad happened to one of my carnals, I was there to ride for him. Also, when a carnal had no place to stay, and was hungry, I welcomed him to my casa with open arms, and fed him 'til he was full. But most important though, is, I show respect but demand it back. Alrato.

-V

From The Beat: And we know something that's equally important, and that is – self respect. Without selfrespect, all your gifts - your mind, your heart, your best intentions may not be put to their best use. We hope you are learning to respect yourself, the very best parts of yourself.

Ten Years From Now

Ten years from now I think I will be out of jail and hopefully, have a family and a nice house and a car. And I think I will stay on the low from trouble, but I won't stop doing my thing, if you know what I mean.

Ten years from now I will be twenty-eight-years-old and hopefully, still alive. This time I'm in here for some serious stuff and I'm going to get a few years and I don't know what is going to happen in the future. Alrato.

-MC

From The Beat: We think we do know what you mean, and we hope you'll think very hard about "doing your thing". Would you really sacrifice a good life and a family to keep "doing your thing"? We hope not.

My Dream

I want to tell you about my dream. I had it here in the hall. I was dreaming that I was at my house, gathered with all my homies. We were having a good time, drinking and smoking. Then me and my homie were at the front door. Suddenly, a ranfla pulls up from the corner and took out some quetes and started shooting at us. Me and my homie ducked down. Then I heard some noise and I woke up and I realized I was in my cell, at the hall.

-Jose

From The Beat: That's a very scary dream. We're glad you woke up.

My Life In Ten Years

Here's how I picture my life in ten years: I will have my own house or apartment with my girl and my daughter. Maybe by then I'll have a son, a nice car and a good career in auto body technology. I'll still be doing some of the things I do now and teaching the new generation what's up.

There's still a lot of stuff I have to do, so if I don't go that way, I'm not trippin'. You never know what might happen. I might get locked up for a while or I might die young. You never know. Whatever way it goes, I'm cool with it. You have to sacrifice some things to get where you want to go. Alrato.

-C

From The Beat: No one can really know the future, but you can have a goal, and you can keep aiming for it. And the harder you try, the more likely it is that you'll meet your goals. The real test isn't whether you get everything you aim for, but how you live your life from day to day. Be a decent fellow. Be kind to others, to your family and to yourself. Kindness is its own reward. Wise folk have always said – it's the journey, not the destination. You can begin to enjoy a better future right now, today, this minute. We wish you the very best.

Education In The Hall

Here in this hall we don't really learn that much stuff. We do the same stuff every week. They give us the same lessons and they give us the same work and tell us to work on it. That's cool with me as long as they give us credit. One of our teachers is cool with us, but the other one always complains and takes our points away.

Other than that, it's alright. Screw it – anything to get time out of my room.

-Miguel

From The Beat: Learning is a two way street. Often, you get out of it what you put into it. We bet you've experienced that good feeling that comes when you get the payoff for hard work. It's the same with school. Learning isn't just your teachers' responsibility. It's very much yours, too. If you want more challenging assignments, ask for them. We bet you'll get what you ask for.

My Obituary

I would like my obituary to say that I was a great man who had very difficult years when he was younger. Then he got the chance to change his life around and be successful. He lived a nice healthy life and put the past away. And he kept on going and proved to people that he could make it. He had a nice family and grandchildren that he got to see graduate from high school.

That would be my obituary because that's how I hope my life turns out. I'm trying my hardest to turn my life around.

-Kevin

From The Beat: That's a good vision Kevin. And we're sure that if you keep trying your hardest, when the time comes, hopefully a long, long time from now, your obituary will tell the story of good and decent and happy man.

Mail, Phone Calls, or Visits...

The one thing that is most important to me is visits. Why? Because you get to see your family and talk for an hour.

If you call home, you only get 10 to 15 minutes.

As for letters – they don't really write, that much. But it's all good. I don't really care about letters.

So, to me, that's why visits are better. Plus, I get to see my girl and kick it with her. I wouldn't mind it if they gave us conjugal visits, too. But it's all firme. I'll be out soon. I've been here 90 days. Finally gonna handle business, so I'm not trippin' the visits anymore. Alrato.

-E

From The Beat: We hope when you say that you're gonna handle business, you mean the business of getting your life straightened around. So we trust you mean the good kind of business – the job of finishing school and getting decent work, and taking care of those who love you. In the meantime, we wish you many fine visits.

What Time Is It?

Scenes of clocks on a wall.
Numbers add to it all.
Feel a word from yesterday
that says truth is all it can say.
But lies form in the city.
They break bones that freeze me.
Words made of plastic and fists
shout in fear from the distance.

-Faith

From The Beat: We're not sure what your mysterious poem means, but we do like it. You are a talented writer. We'd much appreciate it if you'd send us a few poems, now and then, from your travels.

The Most Important Contact

The most important contact to me is visits because I don't really write letters, or that stuff. All I do is wait each week to see the woman who gave birth to me. She is so special to me.

Well, we don't get to have letters in our rooms, to read over and over again.

I really like visits because my moms always comes to see me. I love her so much. She is a loving person.

Today is Friday. In a few days I'll get to see her, but for just a freakin' hour. It goes so fast. Sometimes it doesn't seem like an hour.

-Jose

From The Beat: We know you didn't used to write, but we also know that you've just discovered that writing is pretty cool. That poem you wrote for us was a Piece Of The Week. We know that you love those visits. But try writing a letter to your mom. You'd have a good time writing it, and she would cherish it. Unlike you, she can pick it up any time and read it over and over. Give it a try.

Freedom

To be on the outs,
to be runnin' abouts,
to be kickin it with my homies
all around town
from here to there
from the mountains
to all around
I'll soon be in my town
I want my freedom
just as you
I don't care
what I have to do
Freedom

-Tyler

From The Beat: Here's what you have to do: very simply, you have to stop doing what it was you did that caused you to lose your freedom. On a deeper level, you have to understand why you were willing to risk your freedom in the first place. Whatever you did, you know now that you can't get away with it.

The Voice

There lies a gift within the depth of every mind.
Attempt to record it with ink and paper. It's hard to find.
Don't give up or become lost, for it takes time.
Within every mistake there's money paid crime.
It's hard to say if dignity is here.
When the future arrives isn't exactly clear.
The mind runs for miles.
Difficult to carry with every step great smiles.
Answers aren't very hard to find.
But along the way you must hear the voice,
for some are blind.

-Alycia

From The Beat: Wonderful poem. You keep writing. You'll find your voice. It's not far away.

Doing The Crime But Not Doing The Time

Doing the crime but not doing the time catches up to you. One day you'll be caught for a small crime but put away for a long time. It's called 'karma'. It's called 'what goes around comes around'. It's called doing time for your past crimes. It's called being put aside while time stops. All of this can be avoided. That's called 'thinking'.

-Bobby

From The Beat: How right you are. Good piece of writing Bobby.

My Life

My life means to me
what you believe is hard to see
and what, surprisingly still,
is seemingly invisible.
It can't be traded with value.
It's seen through slits of calm.

-Faith

From The Beat: Hey, are you three thousand years old, or what? You sound like the wise old Chinese masters.

The Clock

The clock is ticking.
Soon I'm out the door.
Got my map in the left
and my light in the right.
Trying to find the good life.
No more guns and knives.
Now it's books and pencils
to look for the job of my dreams.
Trying to live my dreams
as I pull off my schemes.

-Finding Total Freedom

From The Beat: You make sure those schemes are good ones, not illegal ones. And stick to the books.

Déjà vu or ESP

I had a feeling I was getting locked up.
Sure enough, I had to step up, go to court, and face my charges.
I had to be a man and face my fear of being locked up, in here.
Forty five days and counting down until I'm out, chillin' in town.
Had that feelin' and wanted to run.
But that would have been dumb.
Knew I had to be stronger so my sentence wouldn't be longer.

-Tyler

From The Beat: Good thinking and good rhyming. No blinking and no slime-ing. You faced it like a man because that's who you am. Seriously though, good writing.

Doing The Crime But Not The Time

I did something bad. That's why I'm here. If I hadn't done that, I wouldn't be here. But now I'm not coming back, ever again. Because when I get out I'm going to pay a lot of bills. I have to learn from my mistakes. But once I get out, no one is ever going to see me, only my family.

-Ruben

From The Beat: OK, but if you see us on the street, say hello. And we'll say: congratulations.

My Favorite Taste

My favorite taste is azor con leche. But I fear I won't have it for a long time. Sometimes I use my imagination to get that taste. And sometimes I get this rage because I'm trapped in this nest. I'm in a puzzle but there are pieces missing. They have enough evidence to cost me years.

-J

From The Beat: We hope you get a break and can soon fly to a better 'nest' than the one you now find yourself in. And we hope you soon get to taste azor con leche, for real, and not in your imagination.

My Dad

My dad is there for me
no matter what he see
me being good
me being bad
I can count on my dad
I have respect
for my ol' dad
no matter what tough time I've had
he will always be my dad
he love me
thoroughly
no matter what he see in me
that's what I call
unconditionally

-Tyler

From The Beat: He sounds like a pretty good fellow to us. You're a lucky guy.

Silence

It screams to me from a distant irrelevancy
probably feeding something meant to be.
What does this mean to you?
Show me what you can do
while colorfully siphoning something new –
using all but blue, because the sky has used it all
to show you as you fall,
slowing your pace, losing the race,
falling into space.
So now – all work is done.
Indulge in fun.

-Faith

From The Beat: You ask us what this means to us, and honestly, we're not sure. If we could siphon the silence, pour it over certain places in the world, slow down the momentum toward destruction, we would. Maybe you can tell us how we're doing. That first line is intriguing and strikes us as almost brilliant. We trust that you are taking yourself seriously as a writer. We hope you are.

Money Is Power

Cars, houses and girls –
money really gives you thrills
money can buy happy
it can also get you sappy
sad, glad, even mad
money really makes the world turn
everybody gets a turn
to learn and to buy
with money you can try
without you can't buy
or get into the sky
on a plane flying first class
you'll be on a bus
gettin' on last

-Tyler

From The Beat: Clever stuff. We wonder if you believe it. You strike us as too smart to believe what you've written.

Mail, Calls, or Visits

I would rather receive mail than phone calls or visits because I would be able to read the letters over and over, until I got sick of them. Another reason why I would rather get mail is because you can say anything you want when you write.

-Alex

From The Beat: Yes you can, which is another good reason to write. It helps you get loads of psychic weight off your chest.

Money Cannot Buy Happiness

Money cannot buy happiness,
but it can make you happy.
When I get money,
I get a little clappy.
I'm not that good at rapping.
On my money, I want to take a nappy.
Not nappy like your hair.
I can growl like a bear
and give you a scare.
Go ahead and dare.
I'll pull your hair.

-Jose

From The Beat: Ouch!!!

If I Can Go Back In Time, Who Would I Like To Meet?

If I can go back in time, I would want to meet Martin Luther King. I would tell him, "Thanks for winning the Nobel (Peace) Prize," and thank him for having that dream. A Another person I would want to meet is Bob Marley. We will write a lot of songs with him, shake my dreads and get higher than kites.

If I can go back in time, I would want to meet Mac Dre. We would hit every function in his S500 Benz. After the party we would get some shrooms too. After that, we would get on hella peal and get stupid doo doo dumb, shake our dreads, bust cars at ninjas, and tell them hurry, up, run.

Peace out, Beat. This my last time in here. I know I said that last time. This time it's real talk.

-Omari

From The Beat: Appreciate the choices for people you'd like to meet. Now, when these men go to meet you and ask about you, what will you tell them about yourself? If MLK Jr. asked you what your deepest dream is, what would you say? If Bob Markey challenged you to write lyrics for a reggae song, how would you compose it? If Mac Dre invited you to write your best rap, sing your favorite original song, what would it be about?

Doing Time

I hate it here and I just wanna get out of here, because all I do is look at my walls more than half of the day. And school is bad, because I don't even learn anything... And before I came, I wasn't really trippin'. I am now, because I hella miss my girl and my grandma... And the showers are so bad, because I have to take showers with other guys (it's nasty.) And I hope I just got one more week so I can get out and just go straight to see my girl... but that's what happens... when you're doing time!

-Joshua

From The Beat: That is what happens when you're inside. Do you think juvy is designed to keep all of you inside or to encourage you to stay out? Now that you're tripping, will the lesson that juvy teaches, that you don't want to be there, stay with you, when you're home again?

Guns Don't Kill People, People Kill People

Guns don't kill people; people kill people.
Guns solve things.
Besides, if there wasn't any guns, there would be too many people on earth and there would be more bums, because there would be not enough money to give out, and nothing on earth would be free.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Guns do not solve a damn thing. As for more bums, not sure we agree with that observation. Plenty of people are dead from guns and they were not bums. As for the money things, shoot, nothing is free, no one if giving money away.

I Thought I Shrunk

When I was a baby, when I put on big clothes, I thought I shrunk. Like something I put on was my dad's shirts and I thought they were mine. Then I thought I shrunk since they were on my knees.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Great example of what you thought when you were a baby. How funny. How did you discover that your dad's shirts were really his?

Being In The Halls Makes Me More Angry

I don't like to be in the halls, because I don't like it and I think it's very bored and I will like to get out, because I don't think I learn anything. It just make me more angry and I hate to listen to staff and I have to take a shower with other people.

-Jimmy

From The Beat: What is making you so angry? Whatever it is, getting into mess and getting yourself arrested isn't going to help you. If something on the outs is really wrong, why don't you talk to a counselor in juvy who you like and trust?

Trapped In The Halls

I hate it here, looking at these walls, sitting in my room for more than half the day. People telling me when to eat and having to take showers with other guys. Counting the bricks in my room. I feel trapped like an animal at the zoo.

-Anthony

From The Beat: In a way you are trapped. Are you using this time out to think about whatever it is that brings you into juvy and whether you're sabotaging yourself?

Why Can't I Run With Happiness?

My dream is to be free
I've got to reach inside myself
Free is where I want to be
Locked up is where I am
Grief stays within these walls
PM to the AM
Where will these thoughts go
Far into the sky?
All my life I wanted to know
With never asking why
Why do I feel this?
Why can't it fade away?
Why can't I run with happiness?
Instead, pain every day
Why does the law
Join with the POs?
Or, the other way around
Can your love for one walking
Around the same old town
The warrant is there
And one day will go away
But until then
Only time will tell
If the street life succeeds
Yes, freedom is here to stay
And I'll have no need to rebel
Go, go far, far into another phase
And rest with your dreams
Remember the things you have loved
And love
'Cause placement complained, too
Freedom is a root beer float
Without the whipped creme
Thinking in a box, keeps you in a box

-Rabby

From The Beat: Wonderful poem. You're right that grief stays within the walls of juvy. What's causing your grief? Would it help you to talk to a counselor in juvy you trust, or someone on the outs, or to keep writing?

all I do is look at my walls more than half of the day

Step Up'

I never imagined.
Now I am a father at 17. It did happen.
My son wasn't a mistake. He is a sign to step up to the plate.
Yeah, her family does hate. They say, I stay behind gates and that I cant function in civilization day by day.
In reality, they just want me to change my way.
And I am ready to step up. Show them in front of their face.
For myself, I don't want to be a family disagree.
I got a smart brain. Going to waste in this place.
My family needs to maintain safe. Me by their side is the best way.
I'll protect until the day I hit the grave,
I got to step up, become mentally tough
because a week mind can fall and not get up.
It's easily overcome by evil temptations, then drugged until it feels dumb. Now it turns numb to the people who want to give you love
and everything else as well.
You don't even give a damn about your health.
So tell me, when is it time to step up and say enough?

-Tavito

From The Beat: This is a wonderful poem, and the fact that you want a different life for yourself and for your family tells us that you can achieve what you want by working for it. It appears that you've answered that final question about when it's time to say "enough" with the one-word answer: Now!

No More Coming Back

Every time I eave this damn place, I say it's the last time
Well, this time was the fourth time
But this time is different, it's definitely the last
Because for me it's time to go towards my future and forget the past
I'm going to find myself working and heading for graduation
I can't wait for the principal to shake my hand and say, "Congratulations!"
Then off to college I go.
To start the opining act of the big show
The show is called my life
And no one can buy a ticket at any price
It's mine; I'm keeping it; no one can take it
Even with a bullet, I live on, my life is not forsaken
Because I've accepted God in my life and He's lifted the stress
So now my life only leads me to one of success

-Wilson

From The Beat: We're so happy for you because it's clear to us that you have turned a corner in your life, and one that has you walking in an entirely new and better direction. We understand why you credit God for this change, but we wonder what event or series of events led you there? Whatever the answer, we already want to extend our hand to you and say, Congratulations!

Mind Power

The mind can be capable of producing so much
when one puts forth the necessary effort
achievement has unlimited boundaries.
Imbred by causes with the intentions coming from hell.
Words are my favorite things in life.
That's why I choose to use so little.
Surprised by how they speak out much harder than every thing
but actions make everything.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Tell us more about this mind power you possess. What are you dreams? Use your words!

Words Of Wisdom

Sin and sorrow in the air
Children dying everywhere
Kids are dying for a number or a color
Give up the gangbang or what he said about your mother
Put down the gun, put down the knife, leave the weapons
Karma comes around, in front a bus he will be steppin'
Quit your cryin' and deal with the hand you are dealt
And please, young son, pick up your belt
You look like you got a hubcap hangin' between your knees
With your flashy belt buckle and your saggy jeans
Believe me, I not one to be sittin' here hatin'
I'm just tryin' to prevent you from makin' my mistakes and get your life straightened
So please, young ones, step into the positive and drop all the hate
Please start now while you're young before it becomes too late

-Wilson

From The Beat: Every word of advice in here is worth hearing. But, of course, you must know that the best way to teach is by example. Your fine words definitely count, but not as much as how you live your life.

Comfortable On My Block

When I'm on my block, I see people walking their dogs, kids playing on the sidewalk, people washing their cars, and just people outside chillin'. The skate spots and the abandoned warehouse attracts me to the block because I love skate boarding and graffiti art. The skate spots are really good spots 'cause people never kick me and my boys out.

The abandoned warehouse attracts me 'cause every other day me and my boys could go there and do a graffiti piece, or just go express ourselves in a piece or drawing. Doesn't have to be tags. It could be anything you feel.

I feel comfortable on my block 'cause I don't have to worry 'bout getting' shot or getting' checked by gang members, 'cause I don't bang, and they just see me as a skater.

-Miguel

From The Beat: You've done a very good job of painting a word picture of your block, and how you relate to it. We particularly like the beginning because we can imagine the life that you describe, from people walking their dogs to skate boarders do their thing. Besides adding your graffiti to those warehouse walls (do you get in trouble for that), do you ever express your art in less public places, like on paper for example? We agree that graffiti is a form of self-expression, and we encourage all manner of art. At the same time, though, when others interpret your art as defacing public property, then you put your freedom at risk. Does being here make you want to change anything about how you live when you get out?

My Dad

There when he's there, until he leaves for a while. That doesn't make me proud. When he's here, it's great, but he leaves early and comes home late. There for months, maybe years, until he messes up again and leaves for more years.

He writes and says he misses me and everything will be fine when he's out. We'll have money, but in my mind, I know he won't stop. So I celebrate this Father's Day with no dad. He's sad and I am too, but this young boy has to stand up and be a man.

Happy Father's Day.

-Antoine

From The Beat: The saddest thing about this sad piece, Antoine, is that you know how hard it is to have someone you love taken away from you, and yet you allow yourself to be taken away from those that love you. Think carefully about the things you need to change — the things you need to stop doing — so that this sad pattern doesn't get repeated again and again.

My Father's Last Day

July 16, 2006, my father's last day
He lived a happy, simple life
He worked real hard to support his family
He loved to play sports, and loved to see his kids prosper
He did many things while he was around
He always laughed and made hard days different
He enjoyed the simplest things of life
It didn't matter to him if he owned a lot of things as long as he had something
He loved his family…
I was young, I thought he would be around forever
But I was wrong
He left too soon, too late to say "Good-bye," or "I love you, Dad!
Thanks for all that you have done!"
So I say, happy Father's Day
Rest in Paradise
I love you and will you will always be in my prayers

-Young Bugs

From The Beat: We are so used to seeing pieces about missing fathers, or father's who hurt their children, that is a great pleasure for us to read such a loving tribute from a son to such a loving father. We are sorry that he is gone, but we know that he is really not gone at all, for he lives within you. Live up to his expectations for you to be a responsible man, living freely in the world, and doing no harm, and that will be the best tribute of all.

What Is Happy?

About a week ago I was talking to someone, and they asked me to remember the last time I was happy. To my depressing disbelief, I couldn't remember. At that moment, I just kept thinking, "Oh, I'm just having a blank moment. I just can't remember."

But it's been about a week or two and I've been trying real hard to remember when I was happy, and I can't! I've never been happy? This can't be. I've thought of every option and I can't come up with a thing.

I talked to the person a couple of days ago, and they said it is not only possible that I've never been happy, but I'm not alone. There's many people like me that don't know the true feeling of happy. Sure, we've had so-called happy moments, but we are never truly happy. So I made my main goal to explore this happy feeling when I get out.

So when you get out, try what I'm going to try. Try to find something positive that makes you feel good, and drown out everything negative, and then maybe you to can find happiness like I'm going to.

-Wilson

From The Beat: It is astonishing — and depressing — to read of someone your age who has never known happiness, and all the more because you are not alone. It's especially astonishing because what you have written here and elsewhere gives US so much happiness. What positive thing that makes you feel good are you planning to focus on while drowning out the distractions? Beautiful music often does it for us. What will do it for you?

Locked Up

When I am on my block, I see all the homies kicking back, drinking, smoking, and having a good time. I see me and my homies sporting Nike Cortez, white t-shirts and a rag hanging.

When I am on my block, we see the cops pass by and all the homies with POs run. When I am on my block with my homies and see someone sporting the "wrong color," we let him have it. That's what I see when I am on my block all day, every day, posted up on my block like a light post with all the homies looking out for the barrio.

-Lil' J

From The Beat: And that's why you're NOT on your block posting now, but locked behind thick walls taking orders from strangers who tell you when to sleep, what to eat, when to talk and when to shut up! To keep it completely real, when we read a piece like this, we are struck by the fact that you are still imprisoned in the mind of a child. With luck, you'll grow to see the world is a much bigger place than the little block you've carved out as yours. We think it's stupid when men and women die for the Iraqi flag, the Palestinian flag, the US flag, or the little colored flags you wave around as if they mean anything more than death and destruction. Sorry to be so hard on you, but we've got to keep it real, too.

My Dad

My dad is no one to be proud of. I've only met him a couple of times when I was young. He asked the man my mom married to adopt me, so he would no longer have to pay child support. Father's Day for me has always been hard because I always wonder what my real dad is up to.

What bothers me most abut that is… I find myself thinking about him and hoping one day maybe I can meet him again. Then I come to realize that will never happen, because he wanted nothing to do with me when he asked a man he never met to assume his title, without any consent from the one it affects most.

-Nate

From The Beat: It sounds like your biological father was just too young (either in years or in maturity) to take on the responsibilities of fatherhood, and you're right, that hurts you the most. Besides sometimes longing to meet him again, how does this make you feel when you see other boys making children that they cannot possibly care for since they are children themselves? If you have children in the future, what kind of father do you want to be to them? Was your step-father a real father in your life?

Holidays In The Hall

I've spent one too many holidays in the hall
It doesn't matter, a holiday is a holiday, big or small
I hate not being able to have fun with family and friends on a special day
Like how I missed my special day
I spent my birthday in here about two months ago and now it's gone
It's not coming back
I missed my 16th and now I can't party with my boy from Sac.
I'm sixteen… Ever since I was little I been planning my big one six
Wake up April 22nd and go to the DMV so I can drive the right way with no tricks
I blew it away just like Mothers Day, my lil' sister birthday and my grandpa's too
I'm missing all the fun just for actin' a foo'
I was really tryin' to do good, but to do good I had to do bad
If that make sense, which it doesn't, and that makes me mad
I got about three and a half more months to go before I am free
Then I can celebrate all the holidays at once and be as dummy as can be

-Wilson

From The Beat: Yes, you've given up a lot for your foolishness, and others have given up a lot because of it too. (We're sure your family's special days would have been even more special with you there to celebrate with them.) But we can tell from what you've written that you don't have to wait months before you're free because the grown-up thinking you demonstrate here tells us that you're already free in a different way, one that should help to keep you free in the way you mean. When you do get out to celebrate all those past holidays, don't forget where "acting the fool" got you…

On My Block

Well, what you see on my block is a lot of drug dealers with nice whips and fancy gold rope chains, with a nice diamond medallion attached, shining from their neck. Also, you see people with money, crack sack, and young men running up to cars trying to get money.

The majority of the races on my block would be Polynesians, African-Americans and Hispanic Mexicans. In the area of my block is liquor stores, barbershops, restaurants and public parks that could be hideouts from the cops. That save people from getting harassed from the police just because of the different type of stereotypes people carry on my block.

My block is somewhat fascinating to other people because when people slide through, it's a lot of blocksta's out there, ganged up with fancy clothes, with girls jocking their style while they on the move because peoples know how peoples getting down. And if you don't know what a person about, he's on the low, which is good because in my 'hood, the cops watch and so does the feds.

-Mely

From The Beat: You've done a good job of describing what your block looks like and some of the things you see there. But you haven't told us anything about how you relate to all this. Are you one who takes part in the shady activities you describe here (including running to the park to hide from the police), or are you someone who has higher goals for yourself that include getting an education as a key to a different future?

No Obituary Needed

If I live the life I want to lead, how will my obituary read? Well, to tell you the truth, I don't know what it would say. And you know what's sad? I don't care. What I really care about is how my life is going to be from this point on till death date. Well, I really don't need a obituary because I know my real people would remember for what I did in life and who I really was.

Well Beat, I'm out for good. Soon

-Malo

From The Beat: We're glad that your focus is on how you live your life from this point on, and not the end of it. You say you'll soon be out for good (and that's good). What's your plan for making that statement a fact?

My Block

This one goes out to my block. The way I see it, my block is like no other. There's a lot of blocks out there, but they just ain't the same as my block, feel me. But let me tell you a little about my block, what I see on a daily basic.

See, what I see on my block is a place where people go to kick it and chill. On my block we don't trip off on no one 'cause that's what we do, but if we on the block slangin', we duck and dodge the Five-0's. So let me tell you what attracts me to my block. First is the location where my block located. My block isn't the prettiest or the ugliest block out there, but it got a attracting look to it.

Another thing that's good about the location of my block is we got the best corner store/best sandwich store, and around the corner from my block we got the park, one of the best park in my city.

And another thing that attracts me to my block is the homies that are there, the ones that got my back through it all, the ones that support me through anything. That's why I gut love for the homies on the block.

How did I find my block? I lived and was raised there most of my life, and I can say my block is one of the most safest blocks in my city, 'cause ain't no one want no beef with us, and that on the real. On my block when the homies is there it be crackin', every day is a party to us. Well that just a little about my block. Peace.

-Young F-Be

From The Beat: So every day is a party to you... Are you enjoying the results of that partying now? Does it surprise you that when we read this, we know it could be written by anyone describing their own block. Except to those who occupy this tiny space, they are all the same... If you had been raised on a different block, you'd feel just as strong an attraction to it as you feel for this one. And, by the way, since you do feel such a strong love for your block, why did you give it all up by handing your freedom over to a system that has the power to take you away from it and from your friends and family?

The Ghetto

Well, first of all, the block is ghetto, and sometimes fun. The reason why it's ghetto 'cause I live in the ghetto. We can't have fun for at least a whole night or see the light in a different city. Fun? The reason is I live close to my family and friends. We know each other and we all kicked at one spot and respect each other. That's why we are safe in the 'hood.

When I see a different 'hood, it's not the same. They have lots of lights, people and cars passing by every second, and nothing happen, like fights, shooting or people hate each other. And that's the difference. We have to look out for each other, but it's all good in the ghetto.

-Check

From The Beat: What's "all good" about fights, shootings and people hating on each other? Have you ever lived outside the "ghetto" you describe? Would you like to? Where would you like to go, even just for a visit?

Injustices Everywhere

I see unjust behavior and actions every day. It's a messed up world that we live in, and injustice is just a part of it. I see injustice in a system aimed at delivering justice, a system that robs individuals with potential for a bad choice or decision they made, while letting other individuals who consistently repeat bad mistakes and move on to worse ones... at that, go free.

I see a system that puts good people behind bars for one or two mistakes in their lives, because of various applications of the law and false testimonies, where the victims are always assumed to be right.

A real-life example I've seen is a young man who faces life for an armed robbery, while another man that committed murder received a far lighter sentence. It is sometimes difficult for people to stand up against injustice, because we don't have the power to do so, or we just don't know how. 'Til this day, I don't know what I can do against such kinds of injustice.

-Samuel

From The Beat: You know, Samuel, there are people much older than you who don't have your concern for the many injustices in the world, some of which you have illustrated here so well. We don't think our political leaders, from the President to the mayor, have as much concern for justice as you, even though the Constitution promises "Equal Justice Under Law." So, while we can't tell you what to do to stand against it, we can tell you that simply by acknowledging it and by writing about it, you are way ahead of most Americans we know or know of. As you move through life, we feel sure other opportunities will present themselves to you to be "a drum major for justice," in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. We need you out here, so when you get out of there, please, please, don't ever come back!

RIP

Ey, dog, I miss you and I can't lie.
Thank you for watching my back and staying always by my side.
I miss the stories you used to tell us about the jainas getting high
and about when you did your time.
I'll always remember you, so don't trip.
Whenever you were around, you had my respect and the homies too,
for the barrio you were always true.
When I'm stressed, give me a lil' sign so I won't get depressed.
I got a lil' boy, just to let you know, and a jaina that has my back and not one of those lil' silly beezies. That's all for today. Don't forget that Lil' Stranger is here, and save me a lil' space up there. I'm out.

-Lil' S

From The Beat: We are sorry that you've lost a good friend, Lil' Stranger. These RIPs always make us sad, because we are certain that Lil' Guero would much rather be here living his life than to be remembered for the short life that's over. What about you? Are you living the kind of life that ends too quickly, like Lil' Gureo's, or do you have more respect for God's creation?

Will You Marry Me?

When I look into your eyes and you look back at mine
I can see that we'll be together until the end of time
So, Baby, close your eyes and listen to my words
'Cause I'ma say something that you have never heard
Chica, tu eres todo mi vida (Girl, you are my whole life)
Y yo quiero estar contigo cada noche y dia (And I want to be with you every night and day)
Now I only wait to put that ring on your finger
Get on one knee at a candlelight dinner
It'll make you happy and it'll make you cry
And I wanna be with you until the day I die
We'll always be together from now until forever
An' through hard times, we will always stick together
Before I used to think you would never like me
But then you told me you have never met a person like me
And I know sometimes commitment is a scary thing
Now I have one question: Girl, will you marry me?

-Ricky

From The Beat: This is truly a beautiful proposal of marriage, Ricky, but do you think that you can make a commitment like this while you still haven't figured out a way to keep yourself free? What makes her that special person for you, and what does she see in you that's different from everyone else? True love should be an unselfish thing, which means that if you are serious about this love, it's time to put other things you love aside so that this love can rise to the top. Get your life back on track, and then you will be man enough to join with another life.

Learning About Others Through Reading

It's important to read books about others, because they give us a better idea about the world around us. We are able to count the blessings in our lives while reading the struggles and hardships of others.

By reading books about other people, regardless of obvious differences, we are able to learn more about life in general, and perhaps acquire knowledge that another person had discovered during their lifetime that we may not have come upon yet. For the "Freedom Writers" discovered one person, out of a millions, who suffered more than them — which they did not believe was possible — by reading Anne Frank's and Zlata's diaries.

-Samuel

From The Beat: We can't express to you how impressed we are with your thinking and with your writing. The world is such a big place (and a small one), and we find very few people who have any interest in anything or anyone beyond their own little experiences. You understand how much there is to learn about the world and where you can learn it, but do you understand how much you have to teach the world?

On My Block

There's a lot of stuff that goes on in my 'hood that I won't speak on, but I do love my 'hood wit' a passion. The dudes from my 'hood are like my brothers. They're my family. I feel safe in my 'hood, 'cause I know everyone and they got my back, jus' like I got their backs. I can be myself wit' my folks and they accept me. I hold it down for my 'hood and for my city, because that city held it down for me. Literally, the streets and sidewalks of my city took care of me.

-Bubbles

From The Beat: With you locked up, it seems strange to us to read that you still believe your street has taken care of you. With the number of young people we read about every week paying with their lives (or their freedom), it's hard for us to imagine just how the city is holding it down for you.

When I Am On My Block

When I am on my block, I see people just going at it.
When I am on my block, I see lil' kids shooting one another because of a color that they wear.
When I am on my block, I see people with a mad look on their face.
When I am on my block, you see fights every day.
When I am on my block, you see people throwin' it up, talkin' 'bout, "This is my block," and this and that.
When I am on my block, I see me walkin' out the door to a messed up block.
Well, all I know that my block isn't no longer gonna be like that!
That's off top. My block ain't never gonna change unless the people are ready to change.
Much love and respect.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: You are so right, Grumpy, the block won't change until people are ready to change. What about you? Are you ready to change? In what ways?

Almost Free

I'm happy as can be
Because I'm almost free
I've been here six months
But it feels like years
I worked hard to get here
And I shed a lot of tears
I'ma be eighteen, off probation
I'm gong to try to stay away from trouble
But there will be temptation
I have a plan, though, and I'ma try to follow it
I'ma get a job, not on the block
Something legit
I'ma go back to school
Follow all the rules
Not cut class
Just to be cool
Reading this poem
I know y'all will see
Even though June 16, 2007 isn't here yet
It still feels good to be
Almost free

-M&Ms

From The Beat: Yes, you DO have a plan, and it sounds like a good one to us. Yes, there will be many temptations, but one of the differences between children and adults is that maturity gives you the inner strength to know where temptations lead, and to be able to resist. This poem (and others from you) tell us that you have matured, that you are no longer a child, and that you are well prepared to say "No" when the time comes...

Mail

I ain't gonna even lie. I love getting' some mail, especially when it's a female, 'cause the mail be smellin' like perfume. And all that shhh she be sayin', how much she misses me and that she wants to be my main when I get out. That shhh be makin' me feel hella good.

-Nicky

From The Beat: It is nice to be told how much you mean to someone, but it's even nicer to be told that in person. So, when you get out of here, don't come back!

Stop – Part 2

Stop aborting these babies!
Stop and think when you're having sex that what ifs and maybes!
Stop being shady!
Stop prostituting, act like a lady!
Stop trying to grow up so fast when you're still a baby!
Stop running away from your problems!
Stop leaving, period, just stay and try to solve them!
Stop being the reason your mom has tears in her eyes!
Stop giving up, keep your eyes on the prize!
Stop doing all these drugs!
Stop pushing away when you really need a hug!
Stop killing yourself!
Stop turning away from good people you know can help!
There's much more I can say, but I'm not...
I just wish these things and more will stop!

-M&M's

From The Beat: What a great poem, M&M. This is what we mean when we say you have matured into a thoughtful, responsible young woman. What a different — and better — world this would be if people followed through on this list. We hope you keep this with you always (scotch tape it to your bedroom mirror), so that you're never tempted to start anything on this list that you've stopped!

Dope

Smoking pookie and almost dying...
I'm on the run
Not even caring, always crying...
there's no more fun
Hurting my dad and mom
Exploding at them like a time bomb
Got in a fight with my best friend
Even though she was with me till the end
Out on the streets
Nowhere to go
People always telling me I'm crazy
All I had to say was...
"So?"
All I wanted was to hit the pipe
Even though I always said meth wasn't my type.

-Guera

From The Beat: We're curious about how you progressed (if you want to call it progress) from saying that meth wasn't for you to only wanting to hit the pipe. What happened to make that change? Was it peer pressure? Fear of saying no? Curiosity? What? We hope you've accepted the truth that you now have to commit yourself to a lifetime of sobriety (at least with meth), because if you don't, you'll fall much further than you fell before, and it will be that much harder to pull yourself out of the hole. How long have you been clean and sober? Whatever the answer, build on that foundation and leave that past in the past.

So Fake

Why is people so fake? They try to be yo' friend but always lie in yo' face, then go behind yo' back, then tell da next person what you say. But I aint got no time. I'm just letting it be known I'm 16 lil' youngin, but my way's full grown. I'm locked tryna be coo', but I don't wanna be alone, so I try to meet friends. But I guess it's the wrong path to go.

-Strawberry

From The Beat: There are many fake people here (and everywhere), but not ALL people are fake. If you tell people things you don't want them to repeat, then maybe the conclusion is you shouldn't be saying those things in the first place...

Phone Calls Beat Visits And Mail

What I choose that I think is most important to me between mail, phone calls and visits is phone calls. To tell you the truth, I hardly get visits out here 'cause moms and pops gotta work. If it wasn't for that reason, then I would have chose visits 'cause being able to see moms and pops face to face, talk, and hug each other is a good-ass feeling. It's better than thizzing to me and I love that thizzing feeling.

But yeah, when I get phone calls, I can't even get off the phone when they tell me to, 'cause I'm so attached to it. Talking to my cousins, friends, moms, whoever, about the fun old times. And when I get back to the room, all I think about is all those fun old times I just got done conversating about, thinking like, "Damn! Them was the days," but also thinking like, "Damn! Imagine all the good times I could have had, but that I'm missing out on, like damn, my cousin and them went clubbing the other night. They was going so dumb that they got kicked out." And then hearing all the stories after that, I'm like, "Damn! That's supposed to be me with them right now telling stories like that. So when I get out all I got to say is it's gonna be a rap

-Kev

From The Beat: There sure are a lot of "damns" in this piece. But you know what strikes us? You say that you hardly get visits because your parents have to work, and then tell us that when you're on the outs, you're not really helping your parents at all because you're too busy thizzing, clubbing and having a good time. When your parents mean more to you than those things that you miss so much, that's when you'll stop coming back to places like this!

From Street To Mountaintop

El Camino Real stretches down for miles, some say all the way down to Mexico and beyond. But who knows where it starts? Daly City, the gateway to the peninsula is where El Camino turns into Mission Street, an old school street that's been around since forever, founded by the Spaniards! The culture and flavors bringing the city alive, even in the mist of all the fog that never seems to leave. The narcos must have some type of radar-type vision because they see right through it, quick to harass the foot soldiers trying to earn their stripes.

The view is the spot on top of the mountain where one can feel like he on top of the world. On the rare occasion where I have a clear day, the sunset dipping into the ocean is something else. On the other side, you can see the whole city with its brilliant lights illuminating the sky. An Indian moon comes up from the hillside, looking as orange as death.

I think writing for The Beat is cool, but I would rather send this out to one of my connections to the world out there... Death-stained streets isn't nothing nice, from generation to generation. It fuels the block monsters to pursue their dreams, some searching for a lucrative compensation, others just trying to get by. When I was younger, I didn't have the same intimidation by the narcos...

-A Traveler

From The Beat: Because you did not put a name to this piece, we don't know who we are addressing, and that's too bad because this is truly an unusual piece of writing, a kind of "travelogue" with a difference. We had to edit out a few words, which could be misinterpreted by some, as well as that last line because it was too specific about a spot. But beyond that, we are into your description of the view from on top. The fact that you could get away with things when you were younger that you can't get away with now should be a lesson for you. You're growing up. Time to act your age!

What I See On My Block

When I'm on my block, I see people walking up to a market that is right where I kick it at. I kick it there every day. If I have school, I go to school and do my schoolwork. When school is over, I go to my block and stay there until I have to leave or the police come.

When I go to the block, I see the homies postin' and drinkin', smokin' and starting fights every day. I don't smoke on the block or anywhere else, I just keep it coo' with that. I just look for anything that's not right, and if anything ain't right, I tell the homies and we see what's up. Well, you can get the rest of my story.

-Blondy

From The Beat: If you go straight to the block when school is over, when do you do your homework? Your description of what you do when you see "if anything ain't right" sounds exactly the same as how a cop would describe what he does... So tell us, what's the difference?

Stereotypes

Stereotypes set people up for failure. If the victim of the stereotype takes it to heart, he or she will give up all hope to break the cycle that has allowed the stereotypes to have survived over the years. If people wish to break free of stereotypes, they need to let go of the past and move on, aiming high. They mustn't forget their roots, but they must do something different than what everybody else is doing that caused the stereotypes in the first place.

It is important to break free of stereotypes because they are a set-back for an individual's future potential. They manipulate even the smartest people and destroy them before they have reached or discovered their full potential.

-Samuel

From The Beat: You bring a sensibility to these pages we're not used to seeing. It makes us wonder how you ended up here. Or, let's put that another way... how you found yourself at this way station, since this will certainly not be where you "end up." Tell us a little bit more about you, and where you are going from here.

My Block

Man, we ain't got much of a view, but we right by the high school, so it's good 'cause all the females. "The boys" always parked and watchin' us to make sure we don't do nothin'.

There's hella spots where I live. I stay in this spot 'cause I grew up with these people. They my fam and I trust 'em. It's always hot, so we be movin' a lot. We hit the park or the high school, but they follow, so we hop in the scraper and shake to anotha side and take care of shhh.

-Nicky

From The Beat: To us, this is such a sad description of your day-to-day life because it shows no preparation for the future — and it leaves out the fact that even when you run from "the boys," you still end up in here. Is this what you want for the rest of your life? If you keep doing the things you describe here, you're telling us that giving up your freedom is worth it (because that's the consequence). If you want to change your future, what do you have to do now?

Visits

Visits are the most important thing for me because you can actually see how they are feeling, and they can see how you are. You can give them a hug and kiss. I wish I can see my baby sisters, but I'll just have to wait about two weeks, but I can't wait until that day comes, so I could also see my little brother.

-Mikey

From The Beat: We hope, when the day comes that you get to see your little brother and feel the warm hugs and kisses of your family, that you find a way to be there with them, and to stop doing whatever it is that takes you from them...

Mail, Phone Calls, Or Visits

Mail, phone calls, and visits
It's a privilege, or is it?
They give you good news, but mostly bad
Rarely feel happy with the news, mostly sad
It's cool to see my mom, or write someone
But it's always bad news, like when I lost my loved ones
My grandma died and I wasn't there
I swear I'd pull it out, if I had hair
I messed up and I had to find out at a visit
So there's a privilege, or is it?
I wait forever for mail, and there's no one to call
So I sit back, bored and lonely, in the hall

-Wilson

From The Beat: As sad as it is to read, this is a really fine poem because it tells us so much in so few words! If most of your communications while on the inside make you want to pull your hair out, then the only solution is for you to get out of here and stay out of here! As long as you do whatever lets the system lock you up, you'll always be writing sad poems about what's going on out there instead of being out there to make sure these bad things don't happen.

Why I Love Visits

The reason why visits are more important to me is because I get to feel my mom's warmth. She gives me comfort when I need it, or she leaves me when I need space. I really love my mom. She has been there for me as long as I can remember. Even though she might have a slight attitude problem, she is a good person at heart. I think you would say the same thing if you met my mom.

-Nicholas

From The Beat: It's a great strength to have a mother who understands when to be there, and when to leave you alone. You are very lucky. Don't you think you owe her more than to give the system power to take you from her? Don't you think it's time to be there for her, just as she's always been there for you?

My Dad Is Great

My dad is great. His name is Jose. He takes me to the movies and takes me to the restaurant. He treats me and my mom good. He lives in San Francisco. He takes me to play pool. He gives me great advice. He tells me to stay out of gang life and trouble. My dad wants the best for me.

-Micnall

From The Beat: It sounds like your dad is giving you excellent advice, but it appears that you are not following it. Don't you think it's time for you to "pay back" your dad by not doing the things that lead you away from him?

Just Another Piece

Seen so many streets
Seen so many beefs
Watched a couple of brothers lives get taken with the heat
At first hard to sleep
Me and my other brothers brought it back
Another died before my birthday
Another a few months after that
The rest left to re-build the family
Soon I'll be able to see
My brother's waiting for me at the crossroads
What I sad, happy day that would be
one wish I have is to see twenty-two
But deep down inside
I know life won't let me through
My time here is numbered
The clock's almost out
Outside I'm smiling and quiet
On the inside I scream and shout
I'll see you soon
my bra's through life, who knows
Maybe it'll be tomorrow night

-David

From The Beat: You've seen the pain, you carry the scars of the life you describe in your piece, now that you know what tragedy comes from this lifestyle, isn't it time to move on with your bad self? Are you strong enough? It's easy to stay stuck, the hard job is getting your ass in gear and getting out of a life that brings straight misery.

I'm Hurtin'

I have so much anger inside
I hold it in all the time
I shut down like a dead person
I am mad
I'm mad that I can't see my bro'
I'm mad that I hurt my family
They tell me that I'm like my dad
Hard headed and always in and out of jail
I write to ease the pain
Like a pill it helps me have no fear
I'm tired of hearing people talk behind my back
Then when they see me it's all cool
I wanna just scream and fight
You didn't know, but I cry every night
I always feel like taking flight
But is it worth it?
I dream of a better life
But I'm surrounded by no life
Like robots we all learn after each other
I miss my own ways
Always trying to get paid
But this is how I feel this is my life
I hope I can just rest tonight

-Lady Taz

From The Beat: Yes, we hope you can rest, too. Sometimes, the stress of the world has to be put aside for your own peace of mind and health. Just know that what you're experiencing now is not what you will be experiencing always, that things change, and that good things can happen to us when we least expect them if we keep moving forward.

Don't Judge Before You Know

My response is that you shouldn't knock something until you try it. In this case, he said he wouldn't be able to relate to Anne Frank, but after reading her diary, he found out that he is able to relate to her by getting judged solely on his appearance. So he discovered that a person who doesn't look like him can still have some similarities.

-Nick

From The Beat: This is a good example of how people from entirely different backgrounds, countries, languages, can still share what we all have in common as human beings. Have you ever made the same kind of discovery about someone you judged one way, only to find out later that your judgment was wrong?

My Block

My block is known as dangerous
Gangs, slangin', it's what we do for fun
Redwood City is where I live
I've lived on this block since fifth grade
Homies are all down my street
I can't sleep at night
Too busy watchin' people fight
I always put on the radio
So I don't hear the noise
I put a knife under my pillow
And I say my prayers
I unlock my door
So my lil' sisters can come in when they're scared
My block is quiet
Only when I put headphones on
I sit on my porch and wait for my boy
This is my block

-Lady Taz

From The Beat: You paint a very grim picture of your block, a picture that no child (and no adult, for that matter) should have to occupy. But what are you doing with that knife under your pillow? Is it for "protection," and if so, can you explain the scenario when it might be useful?

When I Am On My Block

When I'm on my block, I see another dude get shot
When I'm on my block, the weapons stay ready
When I'm on my block, things move fast
Stop to catch a breath and you might get passed
When I'm on my block, you talkin' shhh and that's you ass
When I'm on my block, I stay getting' cash
When I'm on my block, I see knocks fighting over crack
When I'm on my block I see my folks getting arrested, putting their hands behind their backs
When I'm on my block, we stay runnin' from the boys
When I'm on my block, we stay with big thangs, no toys
When I'm on my block, I see young people's life get destroyed
When I'm on my block... Well, that's not where I'm at any more
I'm doing bigger and better things
I'm on my way to walking through college doors

-M&Ms

From The Beat: It's all the things that you describe here that allow those with more power, bigger "toys," and the authority of the law behind them, to take you away from all you love and put you behind walls. Like now. So it is very encouraging to read the last line of this poem and conclude that you've opened your eyes to a world that's much bigger than the tiny block that defines and limits the lives of far too many young people. Yes, walk through those college doors and expose yourself to a wide world that will open doors and opportunities you never knew existed... and walk through and grab them!

Visits And Mail

The best two I like the most from mail, phone calls and visits is visits and mail. I like visits because I get to see my mom. I get to give her a hug and a kiss, and when I'm with her, I don't feel locked up. My mind goes to another place.

I like mail, because I get to talk to people that are in the outs. Every time I read the letters is like I'm really talking to them and I could read it over and over and it wouldn't get boring at all.

-Rigo

From The Beat: These are good descriptions of the power your mother has to make you feel secure and loved. When you receive those letters, do you write back? When you are on the outs, do you ever write letters to friends still locked up?

TBWO THE BEAT WITHOUT BRANDON

Twelve Months, Seven Days

Twelve months, seven days
I'm feeling trapped in this place
Twelve months, seven days
My life is being play'd
Twelve months in the system and seven days
Of independence
Twelve months, seven days,
same place, different toilets
Twelve months, seven days
they got you trapped in this place
You can't take nothing from the past to fix
Someone got you pissed
And you point to the target and shot but didn't miss
Twelve months, seven days
It might take time to think about this change
Amazing Grace.
The minimum ways, have your thoughts to meditate
Pushin' plates, smoking haze
Rest in peace for the never made
I tell them I come from the Rez, Northwest of New Mexico

This next writer is a young Navajo man who finds his inner peace by writing lyrics and making beats. He has an artist's soul and creating his art is his therapy. This week we are pleased to receive a poem from him about him and his experiences, mainly the ones he's going through now. He repeats four words throughout the poem, "Twelve months, seven days," and we are wondering what the significance of that is. We're assuming from what we read that that's how much time he has to serve. But we could be wrong. He's writing from San Juan County Juvenile Hall in Farmington, New Mexico, and we can't stress enough how important it is for us to be able to witness someone as courageous as he is when sharing such intimate characteristics of his mind. Thank you...

I mange to survive day and night
Destruction running thru my sight
I count how many haters might laugh at my life
The blink of one eye
Now I'm wasting time, losing light
Never mind 'cause I like to bust my rhymes and I'm feeling
Something they all will never find, not know wrong from right
Never show, just like to bust these flows
Should I stop or keep going
Like a Navajo soldja
Twelve months, seven days
I'm trapped in this place

Writing can change the world. Through writing experiences are shared, we teach others about who we are and we change minds.

DORTELL WILLIAMS

There are many different reasons why people write, but the most popular reason in this publication is to be heard. For this next writer, "writing to be heard" is so important he wrote a piece about it. And for us we love hearing what most of you have to say. He effectively describes the power of writing and although it would take lifetimes to list all the benefits of writing, we think he did a great job summarizing it. He's writing from a California State Prison in Lancaster, CA, and if he's genuine with his piece, which we're sure he is, we should be hearing more from him again real soon.

Writing To Be Heard

One thing I like about writing is that it gives us all a voice. From prisons to ghettos, to palaces and the White House, everyone reads and writes.

Writing can change the world. Through writing experiences are shared, we teach others about who we are and we change minds.

They say youth can't vote, but there's another way to be heard. Youth can express their needs to desires through writing. Youth can write directly to politicians, from the mayor to state senators — even the president! To tell them how we feel; to tell them more things to do in school, more recreation centers, less crowded classrooms, less guns and bullets to duck and dodge from — whatever we want.

We can also send short letters to newspaper editors and they will print them, too.

That's what I like about writing; it gives us all a voice.

JULIO

This next writer is getting out in three months and we're so happy for him. But we also feel like this next poem is more appropriate in an envelope to the actual person than published in our pages, but because it's summer time and love is definitely in the air, we decided to roll with it. He's obviously talking to someone he wants to reconnect with once he gets out. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Next time save that stuff for her, player...

I Love You

Do you love me? Yes I love you.
Do you need me? Yes I need you.
I do love you baby girl from the bottom of my heart.
I can't stop thinking of you because I'll fall apart
And every time you get near my skin gets the chills
Because all I want is love you and kiss you.
You've open my mind for my eyes to see
And when you leave I feel lonely
And can't never think with my heart and soul.
I'll never leave you all alone
We could turn anger into loving and bring it into our happy home.
It's all love and happiness what we depend of.
If you could open up my heart and look deep inside,
Ah baby girl tears would fall straight from your eyes.
Love is everlasting. It's like a penny. It won't never change
A life with you is all I want
I could teach you some nasty ways if you want
When you look into my heart you get a vision of you and me
Loving each other for all eternity.
Just me and you making love between the sheets.
So as time commands and our pleasure demands
You and I will stand hand in hand
Well, baby girl just some ways of telling you we're together
And I only want you girl forever
And I sit here and express my inner feelings
It's just a little wicked way to say I love you.

RAY SANCHEZ JR.

Honestly?

Honestly?
I don't mess with Gotti's, cats who Fugazi
Act like you done buried bodies
You think it's coo' to act a foo'?
And blow outta proportion how you been broke the rules?
So, you floss your wounds, shots from tools
And swang a chain wit' a gang of jewels
I had it too, but unlike you
I done gamed up on how it do
A bullet wound marks how you was slippin'
You proud of that?
You ninjas trippin'
Them kicks you flippin' where they now?
They ain't got you out of where you sittin'
You livin' shifty, ain't got a home
That block you claim, it aint a block you own
When you dead and gone, that block'll move on
Honestly, there's a gang of B-G's
Whose mistakes are yours, progressively cloned
And what about pimpin'?
You think you a man to rely on a tramp?
To get yo' chips in?
It ain't that I'm sympin'
I just rely on my own two feet
To walk streets wit' stacked cheese
So what's a pimp without a H-O-E's?
Not a damn thing, so ninja please
I can bubble something as long as I breathe,
As long as I bleed
I stay true to God, stay true to me
Honestly

Cell Soldiers

I hear these cats woofin'
Barkin' 'bout connections, respect,
And hella previous bookin's
Lookin' like they got too much pep in thei' step
Bravado done got yo' head harder than rallos
Got real ridas simply disgusted
'Cause you runnin' yo' mouth like Muni runs buses
A sucka 'L', cell soldier!
Just what I need
A mark sparkin' an issue
'Bout those he made bleed
You's a poodle in pits clothin', constantly yippin'
Stay duckin' like Daffy when cats be loadin' them clips in
So you murdered like McDonalds do cows fo' burger,
And pushed incredible kick when ya' zips was sellin'?
Huh! Yeah right. Let you tell it!
I smell tuna from yo' fishy rumors
Lies falsified, man, I deny yo' gouda
How you gonna brag ' bout smashin' with loot?
Didn't you just ask ol' boy to loan you a soup?
Hella outdated, faded, spittin' last year's lingo
Upgrade yo' word game, go cop E-40's new single
I think, bro, you's as hard as water logged cotton balls
What? Butt hurt?
Then take some Tylenol
Bragadocious, false factor, Hollywood actor
Couldn't be hard wit' prison tatt's and Viagra
Your mouth is a woofa, you be bumpin' them gums
I'm hella tired of cell soldiers twistin' lies wit' a tongue

Stop whatever you're doing and if you're only halfway focused on reading this publication, we suggest you give this next writer your full attention. For not only do his rhyme schemes demand it, but also because it's one of our Beat Within all-star writers we haven't heard from in way too long. Every time Ray Sanchez Jr. adds his flavor to our pages, we know we'll have a gem, for his feelings and ways of expressing those feelings blows our mind all the time. This week, he's mostly putting the ones who brag about things they don't have and the ones who are willing to die for a cause they know nothing about on blast — and rightfully so. Any of us who've been incarcerated know how frustrating it is to be around people who's values and beliefs we don't agree with, especially if they're extra vocal with those values and beliefs. We respect Ray's mind and are sorry to hear about all the losses he's been suffering lately. However, we are very glad to hear from him because like he said about the many talented artists, "I eagerly look forward to receiving Beat issues featuring the many talented artists," so are we looking forward to receiving his works of art. Now, we give the floor to this very wise and expressive man who writes us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, Ca.

Give me a fish and I'll be hungry once it's off the shelf
But teach me to fish
And watch me feed myself

Systemless

It seems I'm an animal
With a last name, last two, an unwanted attitude
Against the grain when ridiculed
Pushed, degraded, belittled foo'
Doctors under the hypocritical oath
Seem to be more hypocrite than most
A shadow of my former self
A wraith
An echo
The memory of a long lost ghost
Strip searched and dignity stripped
CDC "R"? A hundred percept bullspit!
Once remorseful, now pissed
How'll they ever rehabilitate this
My P-O knows I'm po' but still ask how I feel
Tempt the tyrant inside to once again pick up the steel
Gov't aid says I gotta take a class before I get a check
Or go lookin' for a job
Tell me what the hell is this?
Ass backwards, facts answer
I don't need employment skills
Just a home wit' running water
And food stamps fo' my meals?
Give me a fish and I'll be hungry once it's off the shelf
But teach me to fish
And watch me feed myself
Too broke to afford clinical depression
Happy as hell wit' Taco Bell
My hunger'll keep me steppin'
Smith and Wessons and hard lessons
Keep me guessin' what's next
They enable all fables that lead to coke and meth
Callase Tu Boca, Soulja, park yo' jaw and listen
They make it so I'd rather grind
Than rely upon a system

TBWO THE BEAT WITHOUT

NASIR DAVIS

Where's Da love?

Beat Family what it do, it's your brotha Nasir from another mother. A few serious things on my mind, so you know I'm gonna write about it. I send my respects and love to the whole Beat Family and I'm praying God provides the dollars to keep this wonderful machine going. It's crazy the government has all this money to fight wars in other people's countries for oil or to just be bullies, but they don't have no money for programs like the Beat Within, or to save our endangered youth generation in America. What's really going on?

I'm sitting here in this cell thinking to myself about some of the things I've been through in my short 32 years on this planet. And some of it has to with how a lot of adults kept saying change but at the same time sticking me right back into a corrupted environment. Y'all know how that is to some degree, it's like all the crabs in a barrel trying to pull the one who makes it to the top back down because they're all haters and don't even know why they hating. Sometimes change is so hard when you have members in your own family acting like crabs in a barrel trying to pull you down in stead of lifting you up, making sure you make it.

Now with that being said I was 15 years old with a lot on my head and shoulders because my young mind was in a wreck. I was at my homeboy Shep house and we was just chilling and shooting the breeze when my Aunt Jesse pulls up all frantic and says nephew let me talk to you.

I stroll to the car with my 'hood walk (I've been shot in both legs) and say was up? She say baby your auntie need you to take a ride with her, I gotta talk to you it's important. So I hop in the passenger side of the car and we jet off in her station wagon. She say me and your Uncle Mike is into it, he hit me and smoked off (using dope) all my rent money and money for the kids and he went to go stay with some nasty broad in Riverside. Look I just want to take him all his clothes because he can't come back to my house no more, it's not happening. Love don't live here no more.

So I said calmly what you want me to and need me to do? She said you got a strap (gun)? I said naw. She said can you get one from one of your homies? Because I know you got homeboys who will give you one or let you borrow it? Now I'm curious as to what Aunt Jesse up to? So I ask what's up? What do I need a gun for? She say baby I just want to take him all his clothes to where he at and let him know he can't come here to me no more. I'm thinking to myself he messed off a good thing but she trippin'. Then she say when you dropping off the clothes to him on the porch, if he come towards me I want you to shoot him right in the heart, till he can't move no more. And then she said baby don't worry I'll take care of you in jail (I've been locked up for fourteen and a half years and ain't heard a word from here.) Whatever you need, you'll have, but I'll also tell the judge I did or put you up to it but don't trip it's alright, you'll be straight nephew.

See Uncle Mike was big and real dark, like 6'4" and a good 250 solid muscle, so I guess this is why she wanted me with a gun to do the do to him.

Anyways we went back to my homeboy Shep's house and got at him 'bout letting me use his strap for a hour or two and told me he'd need to hold a few dollars (so called real homie) so I gave him 20 bones courtesy of Aunt Jesse. We was now on our way. I had a black .380 kind of looked like a 9mm, I stuffed it in deep in my Dickie pants' pocket, and yeah my heart was beating hella fast. I didn't even wanna talk no more to my Aunt 'cause all I'm thinking 'bout is how I'ma take this man's breath if he move the wrong way or breathe too hard in Aunt Jesse way.

She kept talking 'bout how she got me and they wouldn't give me that much time because I was only 15 yrs old and ain't got a record. And how she would do this and that for me and she really loved me. I thought that part was funny. Y'all know why I thought that was funny, look what she asking me to do. Anyways we get to a gas station, because she want to fill the car up and make sure she got enough gas (full tank) so when it's time to burn rubber we get ghost with no problem.

We pull up to the curb of a big white looking haunted house up in Riverside, and it's time for me to perform. She say now baby, like it's my first day at school and not that I'm 'bout to murder somebody cause they just couldn't separate. Anyways she say remember what I said earlier, while she got both his suit cases out the back of the station wagon. I said yeah with an attitude cause right now it's do or die if this monster looking cat come out with some aggression, I'ma pop him like it ain't nothing. So I quickly get to the door and ask a white lady who's looking at me strangely is Mike here? She says no but he live here, I say here's his clothes with my hand on the gun inside my pants pocket and with that I say tell him he can't come back to Aunt Jesse's house no more.

Man as I walked back to the car with my thug limp I was thinking God or somebody in Heaven was sure on my side this day. Man she was saying all type of stuff my aunt that is when I got back in the car, I could tell she really wanted me to shoot Uncle Mike. I didn't say much, just ate on some of the candy she bought me earlier at the gas station, plus when it's time to go do dirt or handle my business I don't like to talk about things because a change of heart may try to creep in the mind.

A cold thing about this is my mother didn't know what I did that day and still did not know to this day. I look back over my life and say God was watching over me on so many occasions it ain't funny and I thank him he didn't allow me to die in my stupidity and sins.

Beat family, especially to the youngsta if someone ask you to do something like the above mentioned and say they love you, please know they don't love you for that matter they don't even love them selves, so walk away and walk away fast. Peace and one love to you all. Keep pushing for your positive goals and shake the haters by any means necessary.

Now, this veteran writer is what The Beat Without is all about — teaching from experience. The more we experience, the more we have to teach. There are people we know that have really experienced anything and then try to control how we live our lives. Well, teaching from experience is what we find most effective. And Nasir has experienced an incredible amount. He teaches through story telling and this week he has three amazing stories for us. The first is really disturbing because he talks about a memory he has of his auntie that's almost brutally disgusting. Basically, she was getting beat by her boyfriend who had a laundry list of problems and asked a young Nasir to shoot him because she didn't know what else to do. Talk about having dysfunctional people to look up to. But now in retrospect he can see it for what it was and look at it through the great heart that he possesses. Speaking of his heart, he goes on to write about a memory of the heart when he messed with a girl in high school. And though she was, as he puts it, "A lady in the street, but a freak in the bed," he was attracted to her because of her mature mind, making him feel like she was older than she was, fifteen. Rival gang members forced a miscarriage by jumping her and pounding on her stomach because they were jealous of her pregnancy with him. He then concludes with just as much heart by forgiving those that did him wrong, including himself. And this is a perfect way to wrap up all the emotions and ideas he stirred up within us. He closes by forgiving and for a man to forgive after all he's been through, that takes tremendous heart. We thank you for sharing so much of yourself and please understand you are a huge part of The Beat Family, for you're a natural born educator that makes us think every time you send your writing. We really appreciate it.

Iesha, Iesha, Iesha!

(Was True)

I think back over the years about some of the female companions whom I had in my life as my friends, lovers, or associates and one truly stands out more than others, sometimes I wonder to myself how or why did I let her get away but truth is I was blinded by the hood in more then one way even though she tried to save me in a positive way. This is truly dedicated to Iesha Banks, I still remember you woman.

I was 16 yrs old just chillin' in my room talking on the phone to my female cousin Ayesha no not Iesha though their names sound alike. Anyways she was always trying to hook me up with some females from her high school (which I used to go to but got kicked out for having a weapon in my gym bag) but I kept telling her I only liked messing with women. She would ignore me and say you gotta talk to this girl or that girl but I'd always blow her off till she backed me in the corner and brought whatever female to my house. Plus I guess she figured the nickname I'd been given in the hood (Nasty-L). I had to live up to it by getting at all these females. But that wasn't the main reason I was given that name it had a lot to do with my attitude, and some of my freaky behavior. And not my appearance cause I stayed so fresh and clean at all time.

So this particular day I'd been tried and wasn't about to trip with my cousin when she told me Iesha really like me and wanted to talk to me, plus she stayed in the hood which truly didn't mean nothing to me cause when I was in the hood I was too busy dodging bullets and of course trying to stay alive for another day. Well I accepted Iesha's phone number, hang up with my cousin and called her just to amuse myself. I said the proper hello and may I speak to Iesha, she said this is me "boy" was I shocked she sounded just like the singer Michell'le her voice was sweet and sexy, almost like she was getting busy, if you know what I mean?

We talked about a whole bunch of stuff that night including the fact I wanted to do something better with my life and enjoy helping people when I ain't getting shot at or chased by rival enemies or doing that to them. She told me I needed to get it right before something happened to me because I had just gotten shot and my favorite home girl died in my arms.

She asked me the usual about if I had a girlfriend and so forth of course I said no because that was the truth and asked me why not? I said because I got business and other things to take care of. She told me she saw me and homeboy "Bo" riding past her high school one day when school was out and since then fell in love with me and made it her mission to make me hers. I was like is that right, yeah I've been known to get shy with a female I was feeling but not cry when I got shot. That's crazy some would say and others would say you're human with a heart.

After that first night Iesha and I talked on the phone everyday for awhile till one day I finally made my way to the hood and straight to her house. At that time I was living on the East Side in a nice white quiet neighborhood laying low due to the fact cats was trying to take my wind! But I couldn't stay away no more and crept one earlier morning in the spring to Iesha's house. We already had it planned she'd stay home from school (playing sick) and as soon as her moms left to work I'd jet straight to her house from the East Side to the Westside. She called me and gave me the ok and I made it to her spot in no time. Knocked on her door like I was the UPS man with a special delivery for her. She let me in and when I saw her I was like ok a hip square homegirl. She was the flavor of dark chocolate and a body like a grown woman at 15 yrs old (we're exactly one year apart our birthdays are the same month Leo) she wore glasses had a curl that wasn't too greasy. I was already feeling her because she had captured my mind and it was more then sex. She actually had a mind. But you know she was a lady in the street and a freak in the bed, "For real!"

I couldn't believe she was the age she said she was because the things she did to me would make a grown man cry now. So I never looked at Iesha like a girl to me she was a woman and it was more then the sex and freaky behavior we did. She used to challenge my mind and talk to me about God but I wasn't trying to hear about God but I wasn't trying to hear about God because I had devilish ways at that time and it was hectic war in the street. That first day we was together we stayed in her bedroom for 5 hours straight with old school Keith Sweat playing. When I came out I had hickies all over my neck and body, she thought she was slick but I already knew that's how most females like marking their territory. But I didn't have no woman so I wasn't trippin'. However when I arrive at the pal center it's like a continuation school and counseling center. Mrs. Jefferson (my long time counselor) was mad as hell at me and even went and got the head guy of the pal center. I tried to hide the hickies with my black gangsta jacket on but the collar on the jacket wasn't high enough. Anyways they scolded me and said I was too young to be having sex but little did they know I'd been sexually active literally since I was 7 years old. Anyways that day I was feeling too dang good to let anybody bring down my natural high.

Me and my woman Iesha kept talking on the phone and our relationship grew stronger and now I wasn't trippin' off no other female cause Iesha snatched my heart in a real way but as far as the streets I couldn't or wouldn't let them go and she would beg me to even wanted me to go to her junior prom with her. We had real plans of being together forever but the thug in me was fighting not to change. Little did I know then it wasn't flesh and blood I was wrestling with but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Ephesian 6:12. I was going through it but so was she because I was. She always had something positive to say even after finding out I'd been jumped by some rivals. I used to ask her why she was so good to me and she'd say because you deserve it. That used to mess with my head back then because lord knows I did some pretty terrible things which put it this way I wasn't no saint. Thank God for his son dying for me on the cross.

Anyways Iesha and I got together one more time at her house and made fireworks in the springtime, someone almost had to call the fire department for real! Once again I left with a week full of hickies but feeling like I was on cloud 9.

Well I didn't see Iesha that much no more but now it had been some months since the first time we did our thang with no protection. She said I'm pregnant, and I was happy cause I wanted a baby for so many reasons, the main one was I knew it God allowed her to have this child it would slow me down because now I'd have responsibilities, like taking care of my baby and my soon to be wife, if she had the baby I'd have to marry her and do it all right.

I was happy I was gonna be a father, I still hadn't told my mother about this cause I know she'd be mad at me cause she use to say don't go getting no girls pregnant. It didn't matter no way cause my older sis already made her

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a grandmother twice by the time she was 39 yrs old. Iesha hadn't told her mother she was pregnant yet either but it was her auntie who took her to the clinic because she was throwing up and showing all the signs a pregnant girl show. And for sure she was pregnant.

Things weren't going too good for me, I tried to get in job corps in San Bernardino but they wouldn't or should say advised me not turn my application in because it had to go to Sacramento and they said they would probably deny it cause I was on probation. So like a dumby I listen to the intake lady at Job Corps instead of turning my application in, I should have because all they could of did was say yes or no. Now I don't care what people say I still try things if I think it's gonna work in my favor even if I sometimes don't think it's gonna work.(I do care if it's positive)

Well after knowing Iesha was pregnant and I was the father, I got a cold call from her saying she lost the baby, I must of went numb and at the same time went crazy because that shhh hurted y'all. I wanted to kill up the whole world at that moment especially when I found out she lost it, I mean how she lost it.

Iesha went to school one day and some crazy females from a rival 'hood pulled up on here and said we heard you pregnant by Nasty, she said yeah and they began to jump and stomp her even punching my innocent unborn baby in the stomach. It was 4 or 5 girls. They were jealous of Iesha because I was messing with her and would not give none them silly girls no play. Iesha wouldn't let me get revenge on them or wouldn't even allow to let one of my homegirls get with them. So I started doing all type of dumb shhh. Iesha and I even fell off for a minute and I started messing with a much older female cause I didn't know how to handle the hurt and loss I was experiencing. But the main thing is I forgot to comfort Iesha she was the one carrying my unborn seed. So you know she was probably hurting more than me.

She ended up forgiving me and even was gonna marry me when I first got locked up after I got to the pen from CYA. She stayed in my corner for a year but then left on a good note cause I guess she couldn't' take seeing me in here wrongly. God know I ain't mad at her and still pray for her. I do pray she found happiness in this world and has everything she ever wanted.

Beat this was another true story from a page of my life, hope that helped someone with something they was or is going through. One love y'all and Yallweh (God bless). I'll holla soon.

I Forgive

I forgive those 2 cops for beating the crap out of me in 1993 the night I caught this case they beat me just cause I ran and then made all kind of racial slurs toward me. I do forgive them though cause Lord (Yahweh) knows they didn't know what they was doing.

I forgive the District Attorney in Juvenile hall and adult court for lying on me and of course fabricating attempted murder charges on me when Lord knows I didn't attempt to murder nobody. But I forgive them.

I forgive my lawyer at the time who represented me in adult court for dumping me and misleading me about my whole situation even though I didn't understand what was going on at the time. I forgive you sir. (Plus he R.I.P hope he in the right place)

I forgive my probation officer at the time who was planning my incarceration instead of my graduation from probation and high school. I forgive you Sir.

I forgive the guys who shot me both time on separate occasions and killed my female friend Pumpkin (RIP) it took years and tears to be able to say that but I do forgive and I am letting that go. Anger only kills, don't need no more innocent death, so I forgive you.

I forgive the people who took advantage of me as a child and caused serious psychological damage to me and others in later years. I forgive you all from the heart. It don't hurt no more =). (God had my best interest at heart)

I forgive my mother for secretly smoking crack all those years and thought I didn't know but I knew because no loving mother wouldn't' stab her own 8 year old son and act like nothing happened. That's why I kept loving you and wouldn't allow those white folks to adopt me cause I still had faith in you and believed you could and would change. Mama I forgive you for all the crap I had to endure all these years, I forgive you for all the pain and suffering you as a queen had to endure cause no one cared or reached out to you. I forgive you and always will love you.

I forgive the dirty system for kidnapping me in the middle of the night from my family who I was a baby and then not returning me till I was almost grown, I forgive you all from the heart.

I forgive you Cindy for taking my young heart out of my chest and ripping it apart like you was super woman and then laughing at me while I was in jail. Baby I do forgive you because you didn't know what you was doing and what don't kill me only will make me stronger if I allow it to. So you're truly forgiven.

I forgive all my fake homeboys on the street for turning they back on a brotha when I got locked up and for not ever enquiring about my well being in fourteen years of being in prison.

I forgive my family for turning their backs on me when I needed them most and for always looking down on me instead of trying to bring me up to their levels. I forgive them for everything.

I forgive the school system for failing me, I mean not helping me when I was reaching out with my heart and soul for help, but they didn't wanna hear it I forgive you all.

I forgive Job Corps and the United States Navy for not accepting me because I didn't have a high school diploma or was not off probation. I forgive them for not wanting to help me even though I tried to help myself.

Most of all I forgive myself for not knowing what should have been taught to me at a young age, and I forgive myself for not having two loving parents to care for me and my siblings.

Say y'all Beat Family I had to forgive any and everybody I was holding something against in order for me to truly heal and be healed. I feel it's a weight being lifted off my shoulders. I gotta write about it to help someone else who maybe going through some things, because that's what it's about. We are here to help each other get through this life's journey. Remember if you don't never talk about the pain and whatever you going through, how you gonna get through it. Peace and one love y'all.

The Moment To Live For

The moment I live for is the moment to change the way I live and feel. Is the moment to be my one and only self. To live of my true nature, which is the way I was brought into this world, humble, peaceful, no knowledge of all the wicked things in the world.

The moment I live and pray for is the moment to love even the ones who hate me. And the ones who think they hate me.

The moment I live for is the moment to understand the things in life that I have misunderstood. The things about myself and the world around me.

The moment I live for is the moment to be free on the outside and free on the inside, meaning knowing the knowledge I need to know myself and life for myself, and not for what the world think of me.

The moment I live for is the moment to spend sometime with my mother after all these years we have been away from each other.

The moment I live for is to show my mother, my brother and my sister, the love that I have not been able to show my mother, my brother and my sister. The love that I have not been able to show them for so many years, due to me being incarcerated from them.

The moment I live for is the moment to make my own family and be the best father I can be to some beautiful kids.

The moment to live for is the moment to be happy and content with the way I want to live.

The moment I live for is the moment to get out of prison and have something to offer to the younger generation on the knowledge and some real insight to help them along the way. So they could make a better future for themselves.

The moments to live for are the moments to be the best I can be in everything I do.

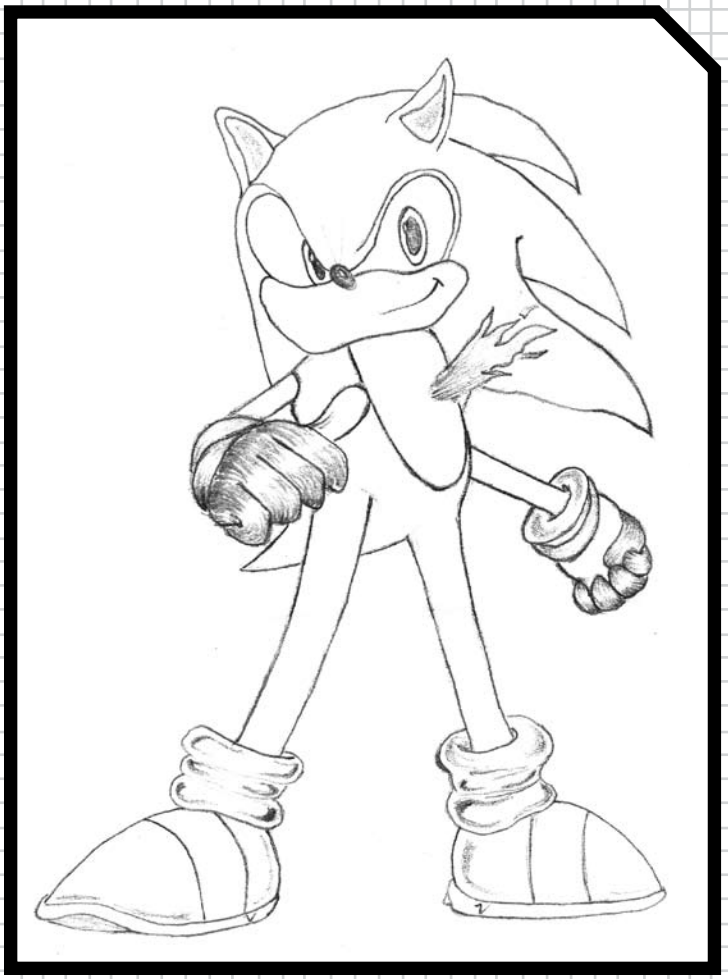
Back To Reality

Come back to reality cause the life we live is no game, it's for real. Each moment is real as it can be cause right before our eyes reality is something we should always.
And the best way to make it is not to fake it and always stay grounded in reality.
Cause what's real is what's right. And what's right is reality.
And keep it real with yourself about everything that you do.
So you could eve be true to the ones who are not true to you
So always stay in touch with reality in everything you do.
So if you are not in touch with reality. Come back to reality.

Time After Time

Time after time I want to change my life.
But time after time I keep stumbling over the same mistake.
I want to do something significant with my life and have peace.
But time after time I am at war with myself
And the world that around me. Why?
I did not know but time after time my life kept going around in a circle without a direction, and with no knowledge of knowing better.
Time after time.

Writing from the Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida, we're bringing back this Beat veteran writer after a few weeks of missing in action. We think he must've transferred facilities. We missed him in our pages. As a matter of fact, after reading his latest piece we're reminded of why we miss him so much in the first place. He usually does the repetitive effect, where he creates a catch phrase and repeats it to begin a more detailed and revealing response to that particular catch phrase. This week it's, "The Moment To Live For," and we here at The Beat can relate to a lot of what he's saying, so we know you will. We're glad to have him back and hopefully there won't be so much time in between the next time we hear from him.



Never Say Never

Hardship don't last forever so never say never times will get rough obstacles will get in your way.
But as long as you have life in you to make it to see another day.
Never say never.
Through faith God will move obstacles out of your way and replace them with opportunities so never say never.
Always think clever, that's what will help you pull yourself back together.
Never say never.
When all the good things that you have achieved in life are snatched away from you never say never.
'Cause in the life that we live good things will come and good things will go. But they will always come back again.
'Cause God will bless you 'cause you are His friend.
So never say never.

Moma Always Said

Moma always said
Now you're out on the
Streets lookin' for a
Love you can't find
'Cause you feelin' all alone
Forgettin' that you have
A baby at home
But you ain't tryin' to
Hear that tho'
You walkin' the streets
Makin' money at last
When a man walk past
And put a gun to your
Head saying is there
Anything you want to say
Before you be dead
And in the back of your
Mind you can hear Moma say
Slow down baby 'cause
You're movin' too fast
Your foot on the gas can't
You see baby I'm tryin' to make
Your childhood last, slow down
Baby 'cause you movin' too fast
But now it looks like
You finally hit the grave
At last
Moma always said
Moma always told you
Slow down baby 'cause
You're movin' too fast
You keep slippen'
You got your foot on
The gas can't you see
I'm tryin' to make your
Life last. Slow down baby
'cause you movin' too fast
I'm tryin' to catch you
Before you hit the grave
Too fast
You want to grow up
So fast but you barely
Have a past
Moma tryin' to hold you
To make your childhood last
But all you do is laugh
But in the back of ya' mind
You can hear Moma say...
Slow down baby 'cause your
Movin' too fast you keep
Slippen' you got your foot
On the gas can't you see
I'm tryin' to make your
Life last Slow down baby
'Cause you movin' so fast
I'm tryin' to catch you
Before you hit the grave
Too fast

Karma

Baby girl can't you see
Where your life is headed
(and) I don't mean up,
Look around you lock
In a dungeon
(now you stuck and I bet it sucks)
I bet you there missin' Moma's
Lovin' while you cryin' at night
'Cause things on your mind be
Buggin'. I bet you be thinkin' you
Thuggin' well
You should have thought about
That before you thought you
Were grown 'cause now you can't
Go home

This next powerful woman is writing from the Estrella Jail in Phoenix, Arizona, and this week she sends us some heat. First, in her letter to us, she takes full responsibility for her actions although she's well aware that there were outside influences in her life. She then goes on to write a poem about having a mother for a conscience. At the moment when you're about to mess up you can hear your mother's voice in your ear telling you things you may not want to hear. What her mother told her reminds us of a song sang by India.Arie where she says in the chorus, "Slow down baby, you're going too fast. You've got your hands in the air with your feet on the gas. You 'bout to wreck your future running from your past. You need to slow down baby." It's nice to have mothers that care enough to attempt to pull our coat tails. Then she goes on to personify herself as a leaf and what it means to be stepped on, but then found by someone who sees her true beauty. We really enjoy her as a writer and we know you will too.

Hey Beat

What chewin? Me some pork rinds: naw just playin. But peep game tho', I'm not the type to blame others for my mistakes in life, I mean I can say oh it's because my mother did drugs or because my father didn't love me like he did my step sister. None of them made me take those swings at the creepers that try to arrest me (they did as you can tell).

But I can say that they have a lot to do with my anger and some things that I don't like about myself, but I don't blame them for me being here. I know it's hard for others to actually say I landed myself here or to say well my homie snitch on me. NO! If you were not doing anything wrong then there would not be anything to snitch on, y'all feelin.

But what I'm tryin, no what I am saying, is don't punk up and start crying for moma. Do yo' time and get back out there and listen to y'all moma so you ain't gotta come back in here. Well I'm a let loose on ya'll for now.

Holla Back,

A Story

Let me tell you a story
Once there was a leaf
That has fallen
From a tree
The leaf has been
Step on by oh so many
Feet because the world
Could not see the beauty
Within this leaf
The leaf became rip
And got dirt from
People's shoes that
Did not care for such
A leaf, but one day
Around noon a man
Walking down the street
Stop and stared at the leaf
For he seen something
The world cannot see
He took the leaf home
And cleaned it from its past
He put the leaf in a case
Made of glass the leaf
Has found a home at last
So now can you see
Look harder because
You'll see that the leaf
Was me...

This next writer is a very powerful old friend who has a whole lot of wisdom to bestow on us this week. He first begins with a poem about almost going home that really hit us hard. He explains his thoughts about going home with great detail and actually puts you in freedom with him. We especially like the line about the Country Time sitting beside him because on a hot day we could see that as well. He then goes on to give us more heavy hitting pieces that challenge us to better ourselves. From "Be The Change You Want To See" to "Each One Teach One" even the titles suggest a man on a mission to influence change. And we believe we're the perfect forum for that. He even takes on music in "Act As If" by pointing out its influence on where some of us are today. And though he's writing from a state correctional institution in Wilmington, Delaware, he certainly is no square. And as you read on you'll realized he's just as gamed up, if not more, than the rest of us. We were challenged by his writing and if you can put your pride to the side, you'll be challenged too.

The Choice

As we mature in life, we must eventually look at where we are at, and where we want to be, then it becomes a choice on what steps it's gonna take for us to reach those goals... To remain in sobriety, from use of any illegal drug, or to avoid criminal addictive behaviors like the ones we are currently incarcerated for...

The choice is whether or not we have been through enough emotional, psychological, mental and in some cases physical pain... The choice is whether or not enough is finally enough... whether or not you are tired of being a prostitute, alcoholic, or multiple drug user, drug dealer or petty crook, the choice is yours...

Don't be a follower, be a leader, think for yourself don't let anybody do your thinking for you... The choice is yours whether or not you ever come back to prison again... Whether or not you take the ones who love you through this pain again... The choice is yours to change your life, cause only you can get you... Only you can determine what your life is gonna be like in 10 years... but it all starts with what you do today.

False Loyalty

Man, why that dude I caught this time for not holding me down? Why the boys I rolled with out in the world eating good but not even hitting me with a 10 dollar money order or letter or flicks?

Why the girl I say I love but I cheated on her with her girl not sending no money, no cards at my birthdays, no visits, and won't take my calls? Why am I keeping it real for a cat that won't be as real with me? Why am I hustling drugs for a cat who won't hustle on the same block I am cause he "knows" I'm gonna take the fall if I get caught? WHY AM I LOYAL TO EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING BUT MYSELF?!?

Act As If...

Act as if... understand that... the concept of it... before you do, understand, then "overstand" the reality "REALITY" of the consequences of this behavior... Recidivism... re-incarceration... and possibly death...

To act as if we care about ourselves then do the total opposite is not only hypocritical but it dehumanizes you as a person... you misled yourself then "act as if" it's cool... just cause 2 Pac said "Thug Life" does that mean to go out and rob, steal, rape, push drugs and be a killer?? If he shot or killed as many people as he said he did on record he'd be in a 8 by 10 cell for LIFE, right or wrong?

So just because he "acts as if" and made millions doesn't mean you take his lyrics and any other hip hop artists lyrics and create your own reality... become their false warped sense of reality... then you become a brainwashed pawn just to say you down with a big dawg player!! That's a lack of leadership trait that will undoubtedly be indirectly, or directly, linked to a fatherless or motherless, drug and alcohol, physical abused home... The outcome is jails, institutions, and death... Do you still wanna "act as if"...

Be The Change You Want To See

To be the change you want to see, you have to do what doesn't come naturally... You have to first be your own number one supporter by believing in you more than anybody else... Believe in your good qualities and nurture the positive change you want to see... Plan for life after incarceration while still incarcerated, believe you can achieve all that your mind conceives, and put forth the same effort you put forth when you didn't care no more, when you gave in to your addiction...

Never stop believing that you can't become successful and great, cause you can, that choice is yours. So what you made some bad decisions, bad choices, given the support and opportunity, I believe we can all begin to "be" the change we want to see...

Almost Home

(And I'm not talking about no cookies! LOL)
Everyday is one more closer to the gate,
My new life my new fate...
I'm anxious, scared, prepared and aware
'Cause I know what's out there...
My addiction to the streets the fast cash like interstate E-Z pass
But I know it won't last if I forget the past
And hit the block moving fast...
But that's okay today cause I plan to laugh last...
When it's over, it's a wrap, and I got plans to give back,
So I can't slack, I will nap occasionally under a cedar tree
In the summer breeze
With a pitcher of Country Time sitting beside me...
The air in Delaware the sweet Atlantic Ocean's there
Calling me to come see
All that missed behind bars cause of my felony...
I won't take it for granted or panic
When I released from the walls of castle gray skull...
I'm less than 18 mos. So it's all down hill at a fast pace
Feeling my heart race, sweat on my face ready to take my place...
In life where I belong...

Each One Teach One

It's so simple to reach out to someone who needs help... who needs someone to show us the way... the knowledge we possess can save someone from a life of misery... of failure... of misguidance... To teach what we know opens up doors in our hearts and the listeners mind... by opening up to one another, we are opening up to a world of learning, understanding, and the opportunity to share what we have... to lead by example... to get away from this unbalanced "just us" system...

Each one teach one is a powerful topic for many reasons. For instance today's society is based upon the passing down of knowledge, whether it's religion, business, cultures, etc. But it wouldn't be the way it is if it was taught... so as the saying goes, "To keep it you must also give it away..."

If you know why and how something works, or how to make it work better or how to help a brother learn something to better his are you gonna refuse him knowledge yet you expect to keep it? We must teach one another so we don't fail at life, or at anything we strive to do or become...

TBW THE BEAT WITHOUT

ADAM AZEVEDO

Why Prison Overcrowding Isn't Just The Prison's Problem

This next writer is currently at San Quentin's Reception Center waiting to be sent to the prison where he will serve his time. He gives his description of the problem of prison overcrowding before he offers his own solutions. And you'll be surprised to hear that letting everyone out won't solve the problem. In fact, as he put it, it'll just prolong it. So often people are employed to do things for us that we can do for each other. There is so much money being made by incarceration. From probation departments to judicial systems and even programs like The Beat Within, people act as though we're incompetent because we've been to jail and so outside people who've never been incarcerated are employed to "correct" us. Well, we have news for you, there are many intelligent, powerful people who've been incarcerated and who are still incarcerated. Adam is a perfect example of this. Imagine how productive we'd be as a society if we used our incarcerated as a resource other than to exploit so we can feed our own families. Prison overcrowding is a huge problem, but it's not the root cause, it's the after effects of the root cause. We think Adam is a genius for not only detailing such an insurmountable problem, but respect him way more for not only stating the problem but also offering a solution.

Everybody is already aware that California's prison system is at approximately 180% of its intended capacity. Being that I am currently an inmate in a California State Prison, you would think I would be all for a population cap and release of inmates earlier than their scheduled release date. I am not. Why?

Because the facts are (statistics show 80% of released prisoners return, and I witness these stats daily by people leaving on Monday and they're back by Friday) that if you just let inmates out of their cell, they are just going to return there.

If you took a wolverine out of the wild and put it into a cage for a month and then put it back into the wild, what would it do? Why would you expect it to do anything other than what it has been doing most of its life? If you take someone who has been using drugs or alcohol for most of their life (90% of state prisoners have some kind of alcohol or drug addiction) and put them in prison, then just let them go they will go right back to what they know.

If an inmate serves 6 months or more in state prison, they are given $200 and released back into the wild, most of them with no job or home. How much can you do with $200 and no income or place to stay? Eventually the parolee will unfortunately return to finding ways to support himself and his addictions. These ways are what is tearing apart communities all over the state.

So, releasing large numbers of inmates will not fix overcrowding, it will just stall it. Building more prisons will not fix overcrowding. Previous administrations have proven "if you build it, they will come." While tripling the number of prisons the crime rate hasn't tripled and yet thirty-three prisons are packed to overflowing. The only thing that will fix overcrowding is fixing the inmates.

If the State leaves things the way they are, the taxpayers will continue to pay for an outrageous amount of officer overtime. When the facility has some kind of lockdown or modified program due to violence or perceived security threat, the staff often has to work many hours of overtime or is paid "hazard pay" because of what happened. I will give two examples of things that have threatened security in just the section I am in because of overcrowding.

The first happened because there was not enough laundry available to clothe all the inmates. It is an inmate's job to pass out the laundry and when they run out, that's it. Well, one inmate did not think it fair that he would have to wear the same one pair of underwear for a second week in a row and he took it out on the inmate worker by assaulting him.

Another situation occurred when 300 inmates were on the recreation yard with one C.O. to watch them. Since he obviously couldn't see them all at one time, a man was stabbed multiple times and not noticed until another C.O. just happened to walk outside and see him bleeding on the ground. This last situation will cause modified program and hazard pay for at least 30 days. And every month I have spent in prison, there has been some kind of modified program. So overcrowding is costing taxpayers how many millions in overtime.

Overcrowding is also putting families and communities at risk. Because of overcrowding and the inability to manage so many inmates, the vocational, educational and rehabilitation programs are being cut. So the inmate comes in with a 9th grade education, no marketable job skills and a drug habit. One year later the community gets him right back the same way. Because of lockdowns and modified programs, GED classes are cancelled and instructors are paid but have no one to teach (more money wasted!) As far as marketable skills are concerned, how many reputable companies are going to hire an ex-felon with no real skills or training? Why would they?

The California Department of Corrections (I left out rehabilitation because they haven't earned that yet) will tell you that programs and schooling are available. I am surrounded by inmates who have been in custody over a year and have not had the opportunity to go to school or attend an AA or NA meeting. That is a fact. Four to six prisons have SAP (Substance Abuse Program) yards. What about the other 25+? What kind of inmate do you want returning to your community?

The Parole Department is overwhelmed as it is. What will they do with a mass exodus of parolees? As I said earlier, more prisons won't help because those beds would be filled immediately anyway. And the inmates are going to get out someday. Then what?

Now, I'm not one to present a problem without a solution. The State has thousands of licensed rehabilitation programs that specialize in drug and alcohol treatment, educational programs and job training. They range from 90 days to 2 years in length. Make it mandatory for every inmate released from custody to enter and graduate from one of these programs. Then the community will get educated, trained, skilled and sober people returning to their community. These programs must be state funded because these inmates won't have the money and if they are required to pay, they will leave the program. That is why Proposition 36 is struggling. It is not publicized but Prop 36 clients are made to pay nearly $3,500 to complete the program.

Another part of the solution I feel is to make more educational and vocational programs available in prison. Inmates have no motivation to enroll in any in-custody programs. So the programs that are available are filled with inmates who are assigned, not those who actually want to be there.

There are 3 classification of time to serve on any given sentence. Those who serve 50% of their sentence, 80% and 85%. You serve that amount of time regardless of what you participate in while incarcerated. So an inmate can either hang out all day, do drugs and alcohol and do nothing to try to better himself and get out at the same time as if he participated in some kind of rehabilitation program. I wish that all inmates would seek to better themselves just because it is the right thing to do but unfortunately we have placed ourselves here because we don't always know or do the right thing. The State allows inmates who go to a CDF Fire Camp that are serving 50% of their time to do only 35% while at camp. Why not make that apply to any 50% inmate who enrolls in and completes school, vocational or rehabilitation programs as well? For 80% inmates move them to 60%, 85% to 65%. You will have thousands of inmates signing up for available programs.

Since unions are so big in California, let's not just cater to the Correctional Officers Union. Create more jobs for teachers in prison. Bring in union contractors, electricians, plumbers, truck drivers and steel workers to train inmates in these trades so upon release they can participate in apprenticeship programs in their community. Now you are not getting inmates who have been rotting in a cell returning to the community but people who can contribute to their communities instead.

Many inmates want to better their lives. It frustrates them to not have the opportunity to gain the tools they need. "How can I change if no one will show me how?" It is a statement that I hear often. You wouldn't put your child on a bike and just expect him to know how to ride it without falling. You use training wheels and walk with them and teach them how to ride. Anything else would be setting them up to crash.

Let's stop setting up our inmates to crash and start discovering the potential that lies inside so many not yet wasted lives.

Joy And Pain Entry 2

We've been jumping from one entry to another with this next writer and we apologize with all of our hearts. We published "Joy And Pain" Entry Three, then Entry One, and now Entry Two. From what we can remember this entry is the saddest one yet. It starts off at a dice game where his girl comes up and wants to tell him something that's life altering. But because he's trying to win his thirty dollars back, he stays focused on the dice game. The dice game ends up getting broken up by a drive by and she ends up getting shot. She tells him what she was going to tell him with her last breath and it really is a sad story. He then closes with a poem about all he's seen and how that has made him the man he is today. And as a man he will stand with pride and keep pushing. We can respect a man who grieves as he did, as we all have our own individual ways of grieving. Some of us can't help but use different defense mechanisms in dealing with death. There's actually a grieving cycle and the first step in that cycle is denial. There's also guilt and bargaining where you feel like it was your fault that person passed or where you bargain with your higher power as if to say, "Why didn't you take me instead?" We don't know what stage he's in, but we know the way he described how he grieved was beautiful. Thank you for being who you are! Kaution writes us from Pelican Bay State Prison. His journey began in Central Juvenile Hall in Los Angeles, not long ago.

Spring 1998. In my life you came, in my life you went, and sadly you've been gone ever since... "Bet I six, eight." I said amongst the small crowd of brethren huddled closely as they fixated their eyes on the dice tumbling out of my palm. "Excuse me" a soft voice says and the crowd makes a path for the lady to stroll. As I continue to shoot not trying to lose my winning streak she goes unnoticed. "Uh baby I need to talk to you when you get a chance it's real important." My girl says, "Oh alright." I say still refusing to let up because I'm still down thirty bucks. "A homie gone and see what ol' girl wants and let another ninja shoot" someone says in the bunch of money hungry hustlers. Man, why don't you mind your business and stay out mines." I retorted.

(Screech) a car suddenly stops and just like that everyone is up and running for dear life not caring about the money pile we all greedily sought prior to this. Bullets whistle pass heads knocking patches out of the brick wall we all strive to scale. Some get lucky and dodge the madness and others lay sobbing and agonizing with pain from the various wounds they suffer. Once the gun fire ceased and the wheels of the assailants car could be heard in the distance us lucky ones returned to survey the damage.

As I hit the wall and stepped from around the side of a neighbors house my heart stops. I'm in shock and at that moment I don't move I just stare mournfully at the body in front of me. 30 seconds of stillness is what it took for me to register what I refuse to think. Panic struck but I ran to her searching wildly for the source of blood that stained her shirt. "Amanda baby speak to me," I practically screamed as I shook her hoping for a sign of life. "Come on baby say something," I pleaded, still there is no answer. "Come on baby talk to me" I say as I wipe the sweat and blood spatter off of her forehead "Babe." Am I tripping I think to myself or did she just speak. I move closer, my ear nearly touching her soft lips. "Baby." "Amanda I'm here baby where does it hurt?" I ask out of desperation "Baby listen" she says coughing before she continued, "I wanted to tell you something." "What, what is it?" I say. "I feel cold." I remove my sweatshirt and place it atop her to keep her warm. "I'm, I'm pregnant," she slightly stutters "What?" "Yeah" (she clears her throat) "I found out yesterday." "That's good. I say trying to keep her talking. "You know I could be a good mother." I shed a few tears because I sense she is slipping away slowly but surely. "You know I love you right?" "Yeah and I love you too." And just like that she went into convulsions and departed peacefully from earth.

All up until the day of her funeral I barely ate or said two words. I tried to reach out to her mother but she shied away from me. It was a packed service the day we buried Amanda and even though her mother despised many of its attendants we still sent her off like a soldier, and a soldier she was. Her casket was filled with all the symbols of the gang life: Engraved bullets, flags (bandannas), Hennessey and an assortment of other liquors. As I approached the casket relishing my last look at a girl I loved and loved dearly to this day I opt to kiss passionately upon the lips, eye lids and forehead because to me she was more than just a homegirl she was my girl, my world. I offered my condolences to her mother, but she and the father she never knew attacked me with vicious accusation saying that I'm the cause of their precious loss. I wanted to defend myself, but here I am Angel's funeral is not the place so I bow my head in sorrow and exit the church. I didn't go to the gravesite because I wished to mourn alone.

That night I visited the grounds from which her spirit was called to a better place. Her blood was still stained the concrete and it seems like it was yesterday we were talking on the phone all lovey-dovey like the teenagers we were. I sat there for a minute in silence, popped the top on a cherry coke (Amanda's favorite) and poured a little on the spot where I held her last in my arms listening to her talk about being a good mom. I began to laugh reminiscing all the times we had. I light a blunt and smoke it hoping she could feel the high I felt, and swore to no one in particular that I would avenge her death. A few days passed and so did a few weeks and as I exited the car with a dozen of both red and white roses I felt a burden being lifted from my shoulders.

As I walked looking at the many head stones that make up an imaginary path I start to ponder my life and it's direction for the first time. Once I reached her final resting place I looked down at the first girl I ever loved and the mother of my unborn child and wept for what seemed like an eternity. And as I circled I felt a hand upon my shoulder I turned to see it's owner. And it was Amanda's mother. "I'm sorry," I said an she did nothing but hug me and said "I know and so am I..." the moral of this tale is that life is too short to be taken for granted. And the essence of a single breath should be held like a secret one only shares within the pages of a diary. Many nights are lonely for me even though it's been nearly ten years since Amanda passed but still she still holds a special place in my heart. I cry, I laugh, and continually I reminisce how we used to be when she was alive. I even dream of a life with her and our child. Amanda's mother and I hold a bond and when I was out we often visited Amanda's grave. She corresponds with me even speaks about visiting, but I tell her there's no need I'll be out in a couple of years... You left me, but your spirit still surrounds my being, your presence is felt, because to me you were and always will be my everything... Rest In Peace Amanda and my unborn child, from a lover and a father.

Once I reached her final resting place I looked down at the first girl I ever loved and the mother of my unborn child and wept for what seemed like an eternity.

My Thoughts Number Four

Trial Without Error Isn' t a Trial, It's a Fantasy Based on Perfection...

Me and my social worker Robert Goldberg, to be honest he's like the best adult friend I ever had, were on our way to Compton, 2Pac's "Me Against The World" playing "It Ain't Easy." As I took a drag off my cigarette (Newport of course) and let the wind and the sun graze my air and skin in the drop-top Saab, I wondered silently what my next group home would be like. As we pulled up to the white and black house off the corner of Central Ave. nervousness seeped deep within my stomach. I wonder what the guys will be like? If we'll get along? What type of females stay around here, and more concerned what hood they're in.

As I unloaded my stuff out of my social worker's car, one of the guys came to introduce him self. "Hi, my names Lonnie!"

"Yeah, well if you ain't from my side of the tracks, keep it moving," and just like that I'm making unnecessary gestures, guess I haven't learned much. After the whole, this is such and such he's going to be another addition to the house speech, I asked Robert how long did he expect me to refrain from running away (or in DCFS Terms: AWOL)? He said He thinks me and the rest of the boys and staff would get along just fine, I begged to differ.

Eventually, Robert left and I was stuck once again in a home not of my own. After a few days of where have you stayed and where you hang, me and Lonnie actually planned out to be from the same gang, instantly we formed a bond and went to war with all those outside of us. The house was situated in a rival set and besides us there was Floyd & Lewis that were alliances of ours and a cat named Mick that wasn't in the group home but stayed up the street. So five-deep in enemy turf. The rest of the house was made up of four brothers Courtney, Travis, Trevor, and Terrance and yeah they were on the opposing side. Terrance was my first roommate and we got along fine. I also befriended Trevor and Courtney.

Shortly Terrance moved out to stay with his sister, so I moved in with Courtney once Terrance left, beef arose. Although I'm not conceited I'm considered a pretty boy, Trevor was considered the same. At first we got along, had girl friends that were sisters and two that were cousins. Our falling out came when I got with De Ann, and from there it escalated. De Ann was my heart, rich brown, chestnut eyes, emasculate curves, long hair and defined dimples. She actually got at me and Trevor got jealous, I mean she is in the girls' home owned by the same person that owned the boys' home. Trevor used to go with her, but she dumped him and when she stepped to me they haven't been an item in the nine months yet, he couldn't see her move on.

Besides the hating De Ann and me grew very close and almost inseparable, puppy love is what society would say.

Well I ended up getting my first summer job, crazy aint it? Yeah but all that glitters aint gold and once again I was surrounded by foes. My work environment wasn't hostile just the immediate area outside it.

My relationship with De Ann prospered, but temptation soon involved and tested ones loyalty. Trevor and I were coming together as friends again.

My first post was working as a maintenance assistant, basically I watered the grass, mowed the lawn, etc., me and a co-worker of mine hit it off, everything was smooth until this fool stole his boss' cell phone and blamed me for it.

After a brief investigation I was cleared of the charges but switched positions. From maintenance I moved up to working as a clerk for Compton College now that's work. Shhh I had to run copies, type up memorandums, the works, but I didn't mind, because this fair skinned girl named Mary occupied my free time. She was a co-worker about 16 to be exact and she was very enticing. We used to go to lunch together, plus I used to have her watch out or distract the liquor store clerk as I stole bottles of Cisco for us to drink.

Everyday we'd get high, drink and talk for like two hours and we'd play "Touch Games," a pinch here, squeeze there, you know!? I hate to admit it but I started cheating on De Ann but me and my needs were more mature than hers, so better yet, we found someone to fill that void.

As I worked De Ann joined the summer youth program that was held on Compton college grounds so I'd bounce back and forth between the both trying my best not to get caught. I didn't sweat Mary because she knew of De Ann but De Ann didn't know about Mary. One-day things started to get heated between Mary and me. And I soon found myself... (To be continued) "

Thoughts #5 coming soon "

Love is just a word but the individuals that use it define its meaning...

Who am I? I am a man, and as a man I rise full of pride, strive and determination. A man I am, and forever as a man I stand.

Collageable Picture

Life has its expectancies, and struggle paints a clear picture of pain. The path for which solidarity travels embarks a trail of pure humility. Dreams display and capture ones, inner passion and aspiration. Havoc casts infliction of rage, and the anger that dwells inside seeps freely expressing heartfelt emotions. Tears trickle but are often caught with the vast movement of the palm. Knowledge excels achievements one discovers self. To rehabilitate means to change. To change is to mature. Wisdom reigns deep, but the spirit of life lingers unshackled.

The game is a trap so loosely placed that to escape its grasp takes little to no effort. Chalk lines tell a tale that's embedded with a single memory. To shield is to protect. to teach is to speak volumes from within. A feather blows in the wind signifying a breeze. A chill races through the marrow of ones bones alerting evil's presence. As casket's close they symbolize the end and at the moment of birth shadows the beginning.

Ashes whither just as sand filters through raised hands. Heads bow to worship. Religion dictates the political body. Who am I? I am a man, and as a man I rise full of pride, strive and determination. A man I am, and forever as a man I stand.

WILLIAM FERRIS BILLINGTON

The BibleZ

The Bible, it is your teacher
It will guide you through your life
It will pave your way to heaven
And teach you wrong from right

It will light the path you're walking
Feed you, to help you grow
Its promise can never be broken
Its truth, you'll want to know

It will answer all your questions
When you knock upon its door
Your heart will feel its spirits
It will leave you wanting more

Blessed Are You

Blessed are you,
Who ask to be saved
Look to the cross
Your debt, I have paid

Blessed are you
Who are spreading my word
Turn them to God
For my truth to be heard

Blessed are you
Who live not for sin
When you choose to repent
Your heart lets me in

Blessed are you
Who kneel down and pray
For life to begin
I am the way

The cross is filled with peace and love,
Through faith it fills the heart
It's also filled with strength and hope
And it sets the righteous apart

Hear My Voice

I'm calling out
I've made my choice
Listen to me
Hear my voice

I was lost
I walked alone
There was no light
To guide me home

I read your word
It eased my pain
I found through you
I've much to gain

I did not know
But now I do
I must give
My heart to you

I Pledge To Jesus

I pledge to Jesus
Of everlasting life
My confession of sin
To the one true light

And in his name
I will ask as I pray
To guide my heart
Till the judgment day

I will keep my faith
And say my Amens
Believe in his word
That he will come again

Then upon his return
When I'm raised from the grave
I will meet him in heavens
As one who was saved

This next writer is a very spiritual one. He refers to God in each and every one of his poems. And we begin to wonder how is it that so many people find God while incarcerated. Some do it for reasons that aren't genuine while others do it for very honest reasons. But is it something one can do in the first place? For those of us who believe in a higher power, there usually was an experience or an awakening of some sort, whether it's prison or something else like a car accident. But whatever the case, if that's what offers hope and can sustain us throughout our trials and tribulations then we're all for it. He's writing from Chesire, Connecticut.

Treasure Chest From Heavens

There's a treasure chest from heaven,
And it's filled with words like love,
There are words of comfort, words of faith
And they all come from God above
One by one God placed inside
Words that will help us grow
There are words to teach us right from wrong
And to guide us where ever we go

You'll also find within this chest
Words of peace and hope
There are words to help one understand
And words to help one cope

All the words we will ever need
God placed within this chest
You only have to just look inside
And your heart it will do the rest

At The Cross

At the cross you'll find forgiveness,
Your sins are yours no more,
Believe in the name of Jesus
He's the way, the light, and the door.

The cross is filled with peace and love,
Through faith it fills the heart
It's also filled with strength and hope
And it sets the righteous apart

The cross is a gift of salvation
It's a free gift received through God's Son
Once you believe and accept him
In Christ you're united as one

If you feel you may be falling
And you don't want to end up lost
You'll find all you need to save you
When you're standing at the cross

He Painted It Complete

From high on a mountain
Overlooking the land
I can see the green valleys
A color in God's plan

There's blue sky above me,
White clouds drifting by
A bright yellow sun
Shining down from the sky

There's orange in a rainbow
There's color everywhere
On the distant horizon
Purple mountains appear

There's red in a rose
Some roses are pink
The earth was God's canvas
He painted it complet

The choice is whether or not we have been through enough emotional, psychological, mental and in some cases physical pain... The choice is whether or not enough is finally enough... whether or not you are tired of being a prostitute, alcoholic, or multiple drug user, drug dealer or petty crook, the choice is yours...

read the rest of Shawmba Jones' BWO piece on page 75